

Titan through time

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As his life came to an end, Eren Yeager reflects on his past and all the people who lost their lives. Wishing he could do it all over again, suddenly becomes reality when he's back in Shiganshina as a child with the knowledge of all future events. Feeling the power of the titans still inside his body, he makes a vow to save all the people living behind the walls, once and for all.

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Guess who's back?

Oh no, why am I doing this to myself? I don't have time to be writing another story. :P I've kinda been binge-watching season two of Attack on Titan, and then did the same for the manga. XD There will be massive spoilers in this story. So you're warned. If you haven't caught up with the manga and you don't wish to be spoiled, then don't read.

I had this idea for a long while, and since I was bored, I decided to write this. I hope you guys enjoy. :)

Update: this story is now slightly AU because of the new manga content.

"Titans" Speech

"Titans" Thoughts

Thirteen years had passed. The island of Paradis was completely titan free now. The walls were not needed anymore, and as such, with the help of Eren and Historia, the titans within were eradicated as well. The country of Marley was at the brink of destruction, their titan shifters insignificant compared to the technological advances of their neighboring countries. Thunder spears were upgraded into the more effective Ackerman spears, the name a tribute to the family line who were so efficient in taking down these mindless, human-eating giants. An Ackerman spear had enough power to kill a titan in a single blow.

Unfortunately, what remained of the Eldians inside the country of Marley was killed, their internment zones burned to the ground. They had failed to retrieve the Founding titan two times over, and Marley declared it an embarrassment only punishable by death.

The rest of the world knew the real truth of Eldian history by now. They were not *devils that used to cleanse the people of Marley in the past*, they had brought prosperity to the land instead. Ymir, the first woman to ever inherit a titan, was benevolent. The people of Marley were jealous and anxious that this amazing power was going to be used against them sooner or later. So they spread lies, and once they gained enough power, began to oppress the Eldians. But now, the tables had turned. The Eldians of Paradis had allied with the neighboring countries of Marley, and they agreed to split the ground evenly if Paradis shared their resources with them.

Eren's time, unfortunately, had finally come; his thirteen years were up. He had accomplished his dream. In the end, he had crushed all the titans. He had been so ignorant of the world when he made that promise. He didn't know anything about the titans at that time, only that they ate humans and brought humanity almost to extinction. How foolish he had been that his mind didn't expand further than the walls he used to live in.

All the titans were his own kin: Eldians doomed to wander Utopia for eternity until they died, and humanity certainly wasn't at the brink of extinction either. It was all Marley's fault. They brainwashed the Eldians who were left behind into believing that they-the people of Paradis-were devils. Only if humanity inside the walls had perished, could the Eldian race be restored into its former glory and their sins be washed away. Pretty words that bore no meaning. They were empty promises, only believed if they were forced into your head the moment you were born.

Eren guessed the same could be said for him, and all the people who were born inside the walls. Their whole life was one big lie as well. Nobody ever told him differently. He was sure that if Bertolt, Reiner and Annie hadn't attacked, he would still live his life in obliviousness of the outside world.

Yet, with all his accomplishments, Eren felt empty. Mikasa hadn't left his side the entire day. She tried to remain strong, but he could see she was seconds away from breaking down. It teared him up to see

her in such disarray. He knew he had to leave her soon. Even when she knew this day was going to happen eventually, she wanted to marry him. They had done so exactly one year ago.

Right now, he was chained, ready to hand over his two titans. The Survey Corps discussed heavily about who was going to be Eren's successor. In the end, it was decided that Jean was going to inherit the Attack and Foundation titan.

"Eren," Mikasa whimpered with teary eyes. He was not used to seeing her in such an emotional state. She was always the shoulder he could cry on. He cursed himself for not kissing her that day when they were about to be devoured by the smiling titan. He'd wanted to spend so much more time with her. Why couldn't he have realized he loved her sooner? He'd been so dense, only fueled with anger to take revenge for his mother's death.

"Eren," she whispered again, her hands holding his cheeks gently. Her touch was filled with passion, tears flowing freely from her face. "My whole life, I dedicated to you. The moment you saved me and wrapped that scarf around me, a feeling welled up inside of me that grew every day I spent with you. I did everything in my power to keep you safe, but even I can't stop the curse of Ymir."

"Mikasa..."

"Shh," she shushed him, laying a finger against his lips. "It's okay, Eren I-I knew this was going to be the outcome." She hiccuped and closed her eyes, her sniffles turning into whimpers of agony. A sob escaped her lips, followed by another until it spiraled down into nothing but emotional despair.

"Why?" she cried angrily, her head turned low. She balled her fist and hit Eren on his chest. "Why? Why? Why?" she repeated, each hit filled with less strength. "Why do you have to leave me?" she whimpered in a soft tone. "I love you."

Mikasa closed the gap between her and Eren, and pressed her lips wantonly against his. Her lips quivered, salty and wet from her tears as she poured all her emotion into the kiss.

" *Mikasa,*" Eren thought, his own eyes tearing up as she was kissing him for the final time. *"I'm so glad, that I got to meet you, and that I was able to marry you."*

Mikasa didn't want to let go of him. Eventually, Hange and Levi had to pry her away gently. She was unable to watch any longer, her soft crying breaking Eren's heart.

He looked around the room and saw his friends, all in an emotional state or trying to console Mikasa. *"My friends,"* Eren thought, *"how many of them did I lose?"*

Only a handful had survived after all was set and done, and that pained Eren more than anything. *"So many lives and they're all gone. Why did this have to happen?"*

Eren closed his eyes. He saw Hange approach Jean with a syringe, ready to inject him, who was trembling in fear. Eren did not want to see how his friend would turn into a titan and devour him.

" If I could do it all over again, I would. I would save Paradis, and all the other Eldians living inside Marley." It was strange how calm Eren felt when he thought about this.

"Jean, if you're ready, then let's begin," Hange informed him.

Jean had to steel his nerves and swallow to get his dry throat wet again. He was going to eat one of his best friends. He almost couldn't stomach the thoughts.

"Eren!" he screamed suddenly, snapping him out of his thoughts and making him look up. "I swear to fulfill my duties as titan shifter with honor! I promise to take care of Mikasa in your absence and I'll make sure to spread peace so that the Eldians can prosper again. So stop

your crying before I have to beat the shit out of you, you hear me!?" His voice was heavy as his emotions got the better of him. Jean's tears streamed down his face as he gave Eren a look of absolute sorrow and respect.

For the first time, Eren smiled, and closed his eyes again. "Jean... Thank you." Eren let his eyes wander the room one more time. "Everyone, thank you. We all stand here today because you believed. You believed humanity could one time get outside of the walls. All of us made that dream into a reality. It was because of our hard work that we stopped one-hundred years of living as caged birds."

Eren saw everybody listening intently, their hearts filling with hope for the future. Yet, why felt he so miserable? He couldn't shake the feeling that he had failed.

" *So many people,*" he thought again. *"So many innocent people."*

"Jean... It is time," Eren concluded. His friend nodded and gave the go-ahead to Hange. At the same time, Eren saw his life flash before his eyes. *"Mikasa, Armin, Connie, Levi, Hange, Jean... please take good care of this world."* Eren felt the pressure of a titan shifting close by, he knew it was only a matter of seconds before he felt those sharp teeth crush his flesh and bones into nothing.

" *Is this what my father felt when I was about to eat him?*" At that moment, an incredible fear took over Eren's body. *"No, I don't want to die yet! I want to grow old with Mikasa and have children. I want to see the nation of Eldia rise to its former glory with Historia as its leader. I want my mom to hold me!"*

Eren didn't know where that last thought came from, but he held on to it. He imagined how his mother would always soothe him when he had hurt himself. Mikasa would look at him with a scowl on her face. He always wondered why she was mad at him at such a moment, but only now realized it was because how much she cared and how afraid she was to lose him.

" Mom... Please hold me for a while longer."

When Eren opened his eyes, he awoke with a jolt. Sweat dripped from his face, and his hands trembled. His pupils were dilated into pinpricks, his heart was beating in his throat, and his breathing was erratic and uneven. Everything was spinning before his eyes; he felt like he needed to puke.

"Eren!"

He gasped; the familiarity of that voice hit him like a ton of bricks. *"There's no way,"* he thought, his breathing turning raspy. *"It can't be."*

"Eren, sweetie, you're as pale as a ghost! Grisha! Come quickly, there's something wrong with Eren!"

" Could it be? Am I dreaming while I'm dead?"

Eren's father stormed into the room with a concerned look on his face. "Eren, calm down. What happened?"

He looked at his father owlshly, unblinking as if he couldn't believe it. Even if his vision was unclear, he could clearly make out his father's figure. *"What is happening to me?"* Eren could only murmur incomprehensible. He felt light-headed, his arms two blocks of lead he could barely move.

"Carla, get my stethoscope!" Grisha ordered, his voice not hiding his panic.

Eren felt the strong hands of his father gauging his temperature, which was way too high. "This isn't good," he muttered. "Carla!" he screamed. "Get a bottle of pills that's labeled as AB!"

"I'm on it!"

"Is my mind playing tricks on me?"

Eren was still looking at his father like he was seeing a ghost, until another figure worriedly joined his father's side. "Eren!" Mikasa's voice trembled. "What happened?"

"An angel," Eren's first thought was. He didn't realize he actually said that out loud.

Mikasa's cheeks turned an adorable shade of red instantly, matching the scarf she wore so often. If the situation wasn't so serious, Grisha was sure he had to stifle a chuckle.

"Mikasa, you look so young. Am I really dreaming this?"

With a throat that felt like sandpaper, Eren tried to voice his thoughts. "D-dad?" he rasped.

Grisha shushed him immediately. "It's okay, Eren. You'll be okay. You've got a high fever, so you need to rest. Don't use what little strength you have to talk."

"Dad," Eren said again, ignoring his father's words of advice. "What year is it?"

Grisha perked his brow. Was a virus messing with his son's brain and giving him a state of amnesia? If so, his antibiotics would have no effect whatsoever. *"You're overreacting, Grisha,"* he reassured himself. It was just a simple question.

"It's the year 845, Eren," his father informed him.

"So, then it is true..." Eren whispered.

"What? What is true, Eren?" Mikasa responded in a somewhat demanding voice. At the same time, his mother had returned with the stethoscope and the pills in question, while his father took a couple of them and held them to Eren's mouth. "Here, Eren, these will make you feel better. Swallow them with some water."

Mikasa was already running for a glass of water, not bothering to wait for Eren to answer.

" I'm really back. Back where it all started. Does that mean I don't have..."

An irregular beat of his heart stopped that thought from finishing.
"No, I still have it! I can feel the power of the titans still inside of me. But how? My father is right here with the same titan power. Is it even possible to have two of the same titan powers at once?"

Eren looked at his father, and then back at the pills. "I'm okay, father. I don't need antibiotics, just something to drink."

Grisha stiffened immediately at his reply.

" Did I say something wrong?" Eren thought.

"Eren, honey? What are antibiotics?" his mother questioned.

" Shit," Eren cursed. Antibiotics were unknown behind the walls in 845. Only his father knew about them because he was from Marley. He must have taken a few bottles with him when he came here.

" Well, I have to explain the situation to my father sooner or later. The fact we're all together means wall Maria hasn't fallen yet either."

Then it dawned on Eren. *"I can save everybody. I can stop the wall from being breached by Bertolt, Reiner and Annie! With my father, I can save even the Eldians who're still living inside Marley!"*

Eren could only think that the curse of Ymir was the cause of all of this. It must've reacted to his strong will to save everybody. It had sent him back in time to do things over and free the people of Eldia. He could accomplish this without losing a single life inside the walls!

He gratefully accepted Mikasa's glass of water and gulped it down, alleviating his sore throat and feeling much better already. "Thanks, Mikasa. You're a charm."

The surprise on her face and the blush that appeared on her cheeks were too adorable. If he knew he could embarrass her this easily when they were young, he would've done it way sooner.

"Eren? Could we maybe talk, privately?" his father requested.

Eren nodded his head in agreement. He had a lot to tell him. His mother and Mikasa left the room, and when Grisha closed the door, he held the bottle of his pills in his hand and shook the contents.

"How did you know they were called antibiotics? Have you been snooping around in my basement?"

Eren smiled. For so long he wondered what was in his father's basement. To imagine the whole history of the world was stored there in three books was mind-boggling.

"No father, I haven't. You know I would never go into your basement without your permission."

"Then how?" Grisha questioned.

"Can you make sure Mikasa isn't listening? What I'm going to tell you will sound ridiculous, but you won't have any choice but to believe me."

A gasp could be heard from the other side of the door before someone was running away hurriedly.

Grisha nodded his head. "We're alone now. Please, tell me your story."

Eren cut to the chase immediately. "I know you're from Marley, Father. In fact, I know everything there is about titans, the history of Paradis, and the Eldians as well."

For some reason, Eren had expected his father to react shocked, but he stayed surprisingly calm. "I see," he stated, "I figured as much, to be honest. You talk like a level-headed adult."

"I do? I guess people really change when they grow older."

Grisha nodded his head. "Then I assume you're not my son, are you?"

"I am!" Eren replied quickly, his tone hurt that his father would even think that way. "To be honest with you, I'm from the future."

Grisha grumbled. "There's no way that can be true. You want to tell me that you got sent back to the past?"

Eren nodded his head. He knew he had to convince his father. He wouldn't have believed it either if Armin or Mikasa came to him one day and claimed they were from the future. "I can prove it to you too."

Grisha responded skeptically. "How?" This day was proving to be quite an interesting one.

"Your plan is to retrieve the Founding titan from the Reiss family with your Attack titan and then give it to me, as your thirteen years are almost up. You actually succeeded and gave them both to me. In fact, I still have them."

"Impossible!" This time, his father did react shocked. He licked his dry lips and stared incredulously at his son. As much as he didn't want to believe it, it really began to look Eren was telling the truth.

"I really think it's the curse of Ymir," Eren admitted. "Do you remember the time when *the owl* gave you the Attack titan? I saw it in your memories which I inherited from you. He mentioned saving Armin and Mikasa, and you were confused who those people were. But you know now, don't you? *The owl* knew the future: he was sent back in time as well. I can only assume to save you and give you his titan powers."

Grisha didn't say anything for the longest of time. "*Could it be true? Is my son really from the future? If he is, then does that mean the*

Eldian people were wiped away?" Grisha had so many questions that his head began to ache.

"Okay, you are right. I have to believe you based on what you're saying." Grisha sighed. "But what does it mean? Why are you back?"

Eren looked at his father seriously. "When are you going to leave for the interior?"

"The interior? Tomorrow, why?"

"That's when Bertolt, Reiner and Annie will attack. We have to intercept them before they reach the wall tomorrow."

"Father, listen. Tomorrow, the Colossal titan, the Female titan and the Armored titan will attack Shiganshina and breach wall Maria. Countless lives will be lost... including mom's."

"What?" his father whispered. He could feel his hands beginning to sweat. *"If that's true, then humanity is doomed."*

"We can stop them together! If we set out and reach them before they reach the wall, we can save everybody!"

Grisha reacted somberly. "Eren, what you're saying is suicide. It's like surrendering and giving our titans to the enemy!"

Eren grinned. "But we have the Founding titan. I can control it decently and I already know how I'm going to use it."

The more Eren talked, the more Grisha's head began to spin. *"He's really serious about this. How can he even control the Founding titan when he has no royal blood running through his veins? If he was Zeke I would've believed him, but..."*

Eren explained further at his father's questioning glance. "I've found out that when touching a titan which has royal blood, I can control all nearby titans. I trained this until I was able to control titans by just being near somebody with royal blood. It's how I tore down these

walls in the future when Marley was at the brink of defeat, as we had no use for them anymore."

"Amazing," his father responded. *"So, my son did save the Eldians. I couldn't be prouder of him."*

"So what you're saying is that we should get somebody from the Reiss family with us, and then together, we can get the mindless titans to attack the Colossus, Female and Armored, correct?"

Eren shook his head. "That would cause too much trouble inside the walls. Frieda would use her Foundation titan on you. We need to do this silently without anybody noticing. Once we've defended wall Maria successfully, we can go about changing some politics around here."

Grisha didn't understand. "Then how are we going to use the Founding titan?"

Eren looked at his father painfully. "Dina, your first wife. She still wanders as a mindless titan outside these walls, doesn't she?"

His father stayed silent.

"But not for long," Eren whispered. Feelings of hatred still welled up inside his body as Eren thought about the smiling titan: the one who ate his mother. Unfortunately, that titan was also his step-mom. An innocent woman who was turned into a titan by the country of Marley, and who Eren ultimately killed.

"She'll be one of the first titans to breach wall Maria, meaning she's somewhere at the front of the horde. Our mission is to get close to her so I can command all the other titans to do to our bidding. If that won't be enough, we'll retreat to the wall, where I can command some of the wall titans to help us as a last-ditch effort. We'll defeat all three titan shifters, and give Dina the female titan."

Grisha couldn't believe his ears, but this plan of his son might actually work. "*Dina would live again, and fight with us, for Eldia!*" he thought in disbelief and extreme excitement. "What will we do with the other two shifters?"

"Well, I was thinking of capturing all three of them and finding a way to retrieve their titans without killing them. After all, they would be valuable allies."

Grisha put his hand to his chin, deep in thought. "You want to bet on the off chance that I can find a way to retrieve the power of the titans without killing the host?"

Eren shrugged his shoulders. "It's worth a shot, isn't it?" his features turned soft. "Besides, if there's somebody who can find the answers, it'd be you."

Grisha smiled warmly, and took his son into his arms, giving him firm hug. "As crazy as this whole plan sounds, I want to give it a try at least," his father admitted.

Eren felt a huge relief wash over him. He had convinced his father. He was home, in his arms. His mother was alive, his father was alive, Mikasa was alive and he was alive. Tomorrow, he would stop the threat of Marley with his father. This time, Eren was going to save everyone.

So that concludes the first chapter. Did you guys like it? Leave me a review please. :) Next chapter, Eren and Grisha VS Bertolt, Annie and Reiner. Until then. ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Back again

I told you guys I didn't have time to write another story. :P I apologize for the wait, but I'm back! I would never abandon a story, so I'll try to be consistent from now on and give you a chapter once every three weeks! Also, I changed a couple of small things in the first chapter, but nothing major. :) I hope you'll enjoy chapter two!

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

"Hey, dad?" Eren said, breaking the hug with his father. His voice was soft, almost unsure. Grisha assumed it was because he still hadn't fully realized yet where he was at the moment.

"Yeah, Eren?" he responded calmly. As crazy as it sounded, Grisha had less difficulties accepting the fact his son was an adult in his teenage body and from the future than he would've expected. The prospect of saving all the Eldians and seeing his first wife again outclassed the absurdity of it all.

Eren coughed to find the right words, his eyes darting towards the door where his mother had gone through. *"She's there, probably doing the dishes while humming a happy tune. Mikasa is probably helping her, worrying about me."* Taking a quick look around to take in his surroundings, his mind reassured him he was really in his old room. Everything was on the exact same spot as the day Shiganshina district fell.

"This may sound like an odd request," he whispered as he eyed his dad again, his heart beating faster in his chest, "but could you send mom to my room? I-I'd like a moment alone with her, please."

Eren almost choked up, his eyes turning watery. Now that his mind had settled down a little, the full weight of reality crashed down on him. His mom was *alive*. He could see her, talk to her, and hug her. The emotions that poured out of his body were like a dam that broke.

Grisha smiled warmly while he looked at how Eren wiped the tears away that rolled down his cheeks; he saw how much his son was aching to see his mom. It must be a surreal experience to finally be able to see a loved one again who had passed away for so many years.

"I understand fully," his father responded, opening the door to get Carla and then looking back. "When you're done," he added, "could you meet me in my basement? We have a lot of planning to do tonight."

Eren nodded his head. He knew if they wanted to succeed, they had to think this through. No more rushing into battle blindly. He had the entire night to prepare for the titan-shifters from Marley. He knew all three of them like the back of his hand. Defeating them was going to be tough, but this time around, he had the upper hand and not them.

When Grisha disappeared in the door opening-apparently satisfied with his son's answer-everything seemed to get deadly silent. In truth, this was not the case. He could hear Mikasa's disgruntled voice from downstairs, arguing with his father who responded calmly and sternly. He could only assume she was demanding him to tell what was going on, but she eventually settled down. Yet, with all the noise going on, it was like he was at the grassy meadow where he used to play with Armin and Mikasa a lot when he was younger.

He always liked the silence there while he stared at the humongous wall otherwise known as Maria, convinced no titan was ever be able to break through. It reminded him of this moment, where it seemed nobody was able to harm him or his family.

Then, he heard the soft, feminine steps of his mother come upstairs. A silent gasp escaped Eren-the stiffening of his muscles his only

preparation as she appeared in the doorway. There she was, and she was exactly like how he remembered; those warm eyes-now full of concern for him-locked unto his, seemingly searching for any possible injury. Her soft hands were clasped together-hands that would always soothe him so lovingly whenever he got in a fight or hurt himself.

"Eren?" she asked silently, taking a gentle step forwards. She saw how her son was shivering. The white of his eyes was bloodshot and tears had poured down his cheeks. Whatever had happened was emotional, and she could hear how her son was crying out to her silently, begging her to hold him. It was a mother's instinct that had perfect accuracy.

At the sound of her voice, Eren hiccuped while fresh tears streamed down his face. "Mom," he croaked, his voice uneven as he held out his hands to her. "M-Mom!"

Carla didn't need more reason to rush to her son's side and envelop him into a gentle, motherly hug. She didn't need to say anything to console him either; she knew her presence was enough as Eren cried on her shoulder, holding her tightly like he was afraid she'd disappear into thin air.

At that moment, all the emotions Eren had held in for so many years were finally released. He cried tears of joy for his mom, but also tears of sadness for all the despair he'd been through. He could smell the familiar scent in her hair, hear the soft hums leaving her throat and reverberate through his broken mind, making him whole again.

He didn't know how long he just sat there, his mother wrapped around him like a protective cocoon, enveloping him and shielding him from all the evil in the world. All Eren knew was how much he realized he had needed this.

When he finally-almost reluctantly so-left his mother's embrace, he gave her a weak laugh, like he couldn't believe he was the luckiest

guy in the world. His mother let a giggle escape her mouth in return. She wiped his cheeks clean with her thumb while stroking them lovingly, her eyes warm and pleasant.

Eren remembered he'd always groan when she did that, but he was not going to groan today. He understood she was confused about what was going on, but also saw she was okay with that. There was no way he was going to be able to hide what he was going to do with his dad for long anyway, and he wasn't planning on it either. His mom had the right to know, as did Mikasa. But for now, he had a district to protect.

"Mom," he whispered, pausing so he could take her hand into his, closing his eyes as she continued to give him gentle affection. "Thank you."

Later that evening in the basement of Grisha, Eren was going over the plan with his father one more time. "All right, our top priority is to stop the titan-shifters from reaching wall Maria, so we have to leave early in the morning to intercept them." Eren drew a circle around the area on a map of Paradis where they'd most likely find them. "We know what direction they came from and where they're heading, so their camp for tonight must be somewhere here."

Grisha nodded his head in agreement. If Eren's recollections of the event were accurate, the simple math he had done to pinpoint their location would have to be correct. "After we've found them, we stay low and we wait for the right moment to strike," Eren added.

His father rubbed his chin. "You told me they were going to attack with four titans initially, right?"

"Yeah. The jaw titan is present too, but not for long. We shouldn't intercept until he's eaten by Ymir. Not only will she be a very valuable ally to us, but if we attack before the jaw titan is gone we have to deal with four of them. Besides, he was their leader, if we face them immediately afterwards they'll be vulnerable."

"That's very clever thinking and strategizing," Grisha praised, "but are you sure we should approach them in our human forms? What if they attack immediately because they see us as their enemies?"

Eren hummed. His father's question was a very legitimate one. He had thought about it a lot-if they would immediately surprise them in their titan forms or not, and ultimately, decided it was better to take the slow approach. "They're not going to. In the state they're in, they most likely won't think of killing another human being, especially if we don't appear as a threat. Besides, we don't want to scare them; we want to talk sense into them first before we will resort to violence."

"This is going to be hard." Grisha groaned. "They have been brainwashed by Marley since they were born. I'm not much of a psychologist, Eren, but it's going to take time, more time than we have available."

Eren knew his father was right, but he also knew these three titan-shifters by heart. They were just innocent Eldians-merely children-forced to do what Marley had commanded them to do in hope of a better life. He knew their motives, and with what he had to offer, hoped he could get them on his side.

"We're going to have to try. Especially the female titan, Annie Leonhart, is not fooled by Marley's deceptiveness. If we get her to change her mind, the two boys are most likely inclined to follow," Eren explained.

"And what if they don't?" Grisha asked. He knew the answer already, but he was just making sure.

"Then we're going to battle and defeat them with the intention to capture them alive. We only kill them if really necessary," Eren responded resolutely. He had done enough killing in his previous life. This time, he was going to save as many lives as possible instead. "Keep a look out for Dina and protect her with every fiber of your being. She can't die if we want the mindless titans on our side."

Grisha rubbed his temple, his palms sweaty as he wiped them off on his pants. "Eren, I just hope you know as much about the power of the titans as you do about this catastrophic event," his father said. "Inheriting a titan power from somebody without killing the host is going to be a hard one for me to crack, never mind that my thirteen years are almost up as well."

"Well, if somebody is going to find the answers, it's going to be you," Eren said resolutely. "You're very smart, dad, but let's do one thing at a time."

"All right then, you're right," his father agreed, calming down a bit. "These shifters, we haven't talked about their personalities or skills yet, what are they like?"

Now, Eren smiled fondly. He didn't know why a frown hadn't appeared on his face instead. These shifters had betrayed the Survey Corps and killed countless of innocent human lives. Yet, the only thing he could think of was how Annie had taught him her fighting-style, how Reiner acted like the big brother he never had and how Bertolt was the silent support he could always rely on. He would never forgive them for what they did, but at this moment, all of that hadn't happened yet.

"I talked about Annie before. She's the female titan and also the scariest when it comes to facing in battle. Her style is very unique, relying on a lot of well-placed kicks and blocking a lot with her arms. She also has the ability to harden parts of her body, though I can do that too." Eren smiled at his father's amazed look.

"Keep your distance from her or stay right in her face, take out her legs first," he suggested wisely.

"Reiner, the kid with the blonde hair, is the armored titan. He'll be very frail and indecisive when we face him because he blames himself that the jaw titan is dead, so battling him shouldn't be a problem for me. I've taken him down multiple times in the past-the future for you," Eren elaborated. "His armor is pretty much

impenetrable, as you may know, so you have to rely on locks and hitting him on his joints if you find yourself facing him.

"Lastly, Bertolt, the kid with the black hair, is the colossus titan. Whatever we do, our first priority is knocking him out before he can shift. He'll follow Annie or Reiner no matter what, so when one of those two shifts, he will too, so then we go for Bertolt immediately. If he manages to get in his titan, I will focus all the mindless titans on him to keep him busy. We'll take down Annie and Reiner first, and lastly Bertolt by cutting his Achilles tendons."

The confidence that radiated from Eren surprised Grisha for a moment, but then he closed his eyes and chuckled. Only his son could come up with such a risky plan and be confident it was going to work foolproof. "Well," he admitted, "I do have to say we have a big chance of making this work. After all, surprise is on our side and the conditions the shifters find themselves in are very poor. Also," Grisha added with a wide grin, "You have to teach me how to do that hardening trick sometime."

The excitement that twinkled in his father's eyes was something Eren never could get tired of. He gave his dad a firm nod and a warm hug afterwards. "I missed you, dad. So, so much."

"I can imagine it must've been hard for you, Eren," his father sympathized. "But I'm here now, and so are you. It's going to be all right."

At the same time, a distraught voice could be heard coming from upstairs that Eren recognized as his mom, immediately followed by Mikasa's angry one. Her footsteps got closer until the door to the basement was opened rather harshly.

"Mikasa, please," Carla pleaded after her, but she was promptly ignoring her surrogate mother and stormed downstairs to face Grisha and Eren.

She was still as beautiful as ever, with her gorgeous black hair flowing from every side, and the cute scarf he'd given her wrapped around her face. Her eyes were piercing daggers, though, particularly at him, but he knew her so well that he had no trouble recognizing it as the ploy she used to hide her concerns and uncertainties. From the inside, she was scared, because she felt something big and dangerous was about to happen to them, and she wanted to know every single detail right now so she could keep Eren safe.

"I'm sorry," Carla apologized, "I tried to stop her, but she's persistent."

"Eren," Mikasa said harshly, trying to sound intimidating. "Tell me what's going on right now!"

Instead of being afraid of her or getting angry as he would normally be, he stayed calm and approached Mikasa until he was face to face with her. All of a sudden, her confidence was non-existent. Eren would never do something so bold like this, and instead of flat out refusing to answer her like she had expected to, he did something even more incredulous.

He gave her a kiss right on her nose.

The blush that appeared on her face was the most adorable thing he'd ever seen. Mikasa acting shy was something that was unheard of, but here she was, unable to comprehend what just happened. Gosh, she was so cute!

"I can't tell you yet, Mikasa," he replied genuinely, holding one of her hands, "but I promise I will as soon as the time is right. You have to trust me on this one. Can you do that for me?"

Mikasa balled her fist and turned her head low. For a moment, Eren was afraid she was going to hit him, but instead, she gently put her fist on his chest. Looking up at him, her eyes had turned soft and a

little bit scared; she'd calmed down at least. "Do you promise me you'll be safe, Eren?" she whispered.

"I promise you, Mikasa," he said. Eren knew she wasn't convinced in the slightest but wasn't going to press anymore. She slowly went back upstairs again and found the embrace of Carla. "Let's get you to bed, sweetie, it's getting late," she cooed. "Eren, you won't make it late either, will you?"

"I won't, mom. Dad and I have wrapped things up here." He nodded at his father. "I'll go to bed in a minute."

His mom gave a kind smile and then disappeared with Mikasa upstairs. Eren sighed; this was going to be a lot tougher than he'd initially thought. Telling his father the truth was one thing, but his mom and especially Mikasa? Now that was going to be difficult.

"You shouldn't wait too long before telling the truth," Grisha suggested. "It's like she has a sixth sense for things like this. She's deadly scared for your safety."

"I know," Eren agreed, "I will do so after we're finished saving Shiganshina." He shook his head. "You have to tell mom too, you know."

"I know, son," Grisha replied bitterly. "But like you said, we'll do one thing at a time. Now let's get to bed. We need every bit of energy tomorrow."

Early in the morning, at the break of dawn of a new day, the impossible had happened to Reiner Braun. He was on his knees in the dirt, clutching his head together in refusal. His whole body was numb, his eyes wide as saucers as he looked at how thick, salty droplets of his tears fell to the ground.

"Marcel, no," he whimpered, shutting his eyes tightly. *"It's all my fault,"* he thought, his head throbbing with pain. *"He's dead because*

of me. A titan ate him because of me."

"What do we do now?" Bertolt yelled to the group anxiously, his breathing erratic. They'd just fled from the titan that ate Marcel. They hadn't even reached the wall yet and their leader was already killed. He looked desperately at Annie, who was in complete shock herself.

She tried to even her breathing and control the slight trembles in her hands. She had to assess the situation and think about this clearly. A sigh escaped her lips while she rolled her stiff shoulders. Marcel was gone, Reiner looked like he was going insane and Bertolt was as scared as a trapped mouse.

"We have to abandon the mission," Reiner muttered from the dirt. "Without Marcel we're useless, we will be-AH!" A swift kick to his face shut him up, his already throbbing head exploding in pain. Blood gushed out of his nostrils where Annie had hit him. She kicked him again between the ribs, knocking the wind out of him.

For some reason, beating the shit out of Reiner made Annie think clearly, her body surging with adrenaline as she used another well-placed kick to hit Reiner straight across his cheek; it'd heal, she knew. A titan-shifter had an amazing healing factor. For the time being, she hoped it'd knock some sense back into Reiner.

After she had kicked him for a final time in his belly-making him wheeze and clutch it in pain-her features turned into a scowl. "Are you suggesting we should go back to Marley, be disgraced in front of the whole nation and then executed while our families will continue to suffer from our failure?"

She eyed Bertolt, whose whole body was shivering from the rough treatment she was giving Reiner. She put her hands in her pockets and glared at Reiner again. "You shouldn't have fled from that titan that killed Marcel. Now the jaw titan is lost and we have no idea how to retrieve it."

Reiner growled at her in his pained state, blood running past his lips and chin to the ground below. He hated that she was right-right in the fact Marley would execute them, right in the fact Marcel's powers were lost because of him, and it made him so *angry* .

He wiped the blood from his face, slowly standing up while grimacing at the pain Annie had caused. It soon turned into a dull throb, the hopelessness of the situation making him realize they hadn't much of a choice. "We have no other option but to continue the mission then," he agreed to Annie. He was already formulating a plan to avoid any other mindless titans while also closing the final gap between their location and the wall when Bertolt tapped him on his shoulder feverishly.

"We've got company, guys," he said, pointing his gun in the direction of two silhouettes approaching on the horizon. Both Annie and Reiner stiffened, expecting the worst, only to drop their guards in surprised stupor when the silhouettes turned out to be humans.

They could tell one of them was young, maybe around the same age as they were, while the other was definitely an adult. They couldn't make out any distinct features yet, but it was clear they were approaching them, which raised multiple questions in the shifter's minds.

"What are they doing here so far outside the wall?" Bertolt whispered finally, voicing what they were all thinking. "You don't suppose they're military, right?"

"Not likely," Annie replied. "They look like normal travelers, but that's impossible considering how many titans are walking around here." She watched with a tense expression on her face how the duo came closer, the rising sun casting them partly in a shadowy cloak. Bertolt still had his gun raised on them, sweat dripping from his face.

"Should I shoot them?" He asked unsurely. All three of them knew they were the devils of Paradis that needed to be wiped away, but they also knew that their mission was to get the founding titan first

and foremost. Moreover, killing them would not give them answers to their questions.

"Don't shoot, but keep your gun at the ready," Reiner ultimately decided. He looked at Annie for confirmation, who nodded her head.

"Let's see what they want."

Finally, they could make out their features. The clothes they were wearing immediately ruled out they were part of any sort of military. It came abundantly clear the travelers were family as well, probably father and son. They weren't carrying any sort of weapon either, but they knew looks could be deceiving. They had learned that the devils of Paradis were ruthless, and this was their first time interacting with them.

Annie sharply noticed they were very calm even though Bertolt had a gun pointed at them, and while the distance was relatively far still, he was an excellent sharpshooter. The determination on their faces was the most troublesome in Annie's mind; it screamed they were here with a mission, and she didn't like that one bit.

"Stop," Reiner eventually commanded when they were only about ten meters away, which resulted in Bertolt being extra cautious for any sudden movements. When father and son obliged silently, Reiner eyed them up and down.

"Who are you and what are you doing here?" he demanded. He didn't like how calm they remained. They should feel threatened in a situation like this, but that wasn't the case at all.

"Allow me to introduce myself, young warriors of Marley," the father began, which made all three of them stiffen slightly-he knew they were from Marley. "I'm Grisha Yeager and this is my son Eren Yeager. We are here on account for all people living on Paradis," he revealed diplomatically, his tone not unkind. "Please hear us out."

Annie scowled slightly; Grisha-if he was called Grisha-had a silver tongue. She couldn't detect if he was lying or not, which led her to the conclusion he was telling the truth, even though she didn't want to believe it.

"Why would we waste our time hearing you out?" she challenged them, just to make sure.

"Because we mean you no harm," Grisha offered gently. "We're unarmed, as you can see, and in the middle of nowhere. You could shoot us if you so wish, but the fact you haven't yet leads me to believe you *want* to hear what we have to say."

Grisha had a good point. Annie looked at Reiner and Bertolt uncertainly, until both of them gave her a nod, telling her they were okay with it. "All right," she admitted, "we do want to hear what you have to say. So, go ahead."

The man called Grisha paused for a moment, readjusted his glasses and then smiled slightly. "I'm offering you guys a way out," he said simply.

"What do you mean?" Reiner commanded, his nervousness building. The way how Grisha was implying things screamed he knew more than that they simply were warriors from Marley.

"I understand you are in a very precarious situation," he elaborated, "with a dangerous task of infiltrating Paradis to receive the founding titan while also experiencing the death of one of your friends. There's no way back for you guys now, is there?"

Apparent shock was visible on all three of the shifter's faces. Reiner was baffled how much knowledge Grisha possessed about their mission. Had spies leaked information to Paradis in advance? He couldn't believe that could be the truth, the military of Marley had been so cautious.

At the same time, Annie was wondering the same thing. She felt anxiety kick in but remained positively calm on the outside. Bertolt, however, was visibly shivering.

"How do you know all of that?" he yelled, taking a few steps forwards while keeping his gun pointed at him. "Answer me!"

"Bertolt, calm down," Annie replied, her mind working over hours to find an answer that would make sense. "The last thing we want is to lose our cool."

Bertolt growled at her, but eventually backed off. Reiner had his teeth gritted as well, but didn't say anything for the time being. He knew Annie was right.

"I won't ask you how you know this information," she told Grisha, "but it most likely means you also know we're extremely dangerous."

He nodded. "Hence why I want to avoid a conflict at all cost," Grisha admitted. He paused, looked at his son-who gave him a firm nod-before continuing. "Listen, you guys don't have to destroy the wall or retrieve the founding titan. The people inside the walls are all Eldian like you and me, and they live a life of obliviousness. You would kill thousands of innocent people of your own kin, and for what? To become an honorary Marleyan? To restore Eldia in its former glory?" Grisha shook his head. "They're all lies told by your government."

"Shut up!" Reiner screamed while Bertolt also was on the brink of exploding. "Are you devils trying to deceive us? You don't think but for a second that we would believe you!?" he questioned.

For the first time, the boy who was introduced as Eren spoke up. "We don't," he said gently, "but is the alternative that Marley is speaking the truth anymore promising? They've locked you up in intermittent zones; they treat you like cattle and have taken your freedom away." He gave them all a serious look. "You'd be all executed if you failed this mission. Would that ever happen if you were Marleyan?"

"Then what do you propose we should do?" Annie replied, shutting both boys up before they would do anything rash. They looked at her like she'd lost her mind for even humoring the idea of listening, let alone being completely serious about it.

"Annie?" both Reiner and Bertolt hissed incredulously. She waved them off; she was curious what they had to offer, which made Eren hopeful.

"Help me get you back your true freedom," he offered her genuinely. "Please help us free the people of Eldia. We'll overthrow the faulty government that's installed in both Paradis and Marley together. You'd be free-truly free." He gave Annie a few moments to let that sink in.

"I know you don't trust us; I wouldn't either in your position, but I also know that you're deceptively good at spotting lies. So I'm asking you; has anything that my father and I have said not be truthful?"

"Don't listen to him, Annie," Reiner warned, his voice trembling and uneven. "It's all a trick to lull you into a sense of security. The moment you take their offer they're going to capture you."

Annie wanted to agree with Reiner, but something told her both Eren and Grisha were telling the truth. She knew Marley was full of crap and that her people were treated like trash. She'd hoped for a quiet life with her dad after she pulled this off, but knew deep down that was never going to happen. But now, these two strangers out of nowhere offered her such a ludicrous solution. She almost asked herself what she had to lose.

Both Reiner and Bertolt saw this too, their eyes widening like saucers at the very realistic threat to lose another friend and teammate. They had to do something drastic, and so, without warning, Reiner grabbed his knife and cut himself across the palm of his hand, triggering his shift into his titan form.

There you have it, folks. I promised you guys a battle, but I split the chapter because otherwise it would be too long. :P Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Please review! I promise to respond to all the reviews I get. :3 Next chapter will truly be Annie, Reiner and Bertolt versus Eren and Grisha. Until then. ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Eren's back

As promised, chapter three is here! I am, unfortunately, in the middle of a writer's block that's very persistent. I hope I can give you the next chapter in three weeks! Anyway, enjoy this one in the meantime. :)

~Guest: (...) I'm hooked up!

Thank you! Enjoy the next chapter.

~Guest: One of the best snk stories and certainly the most creative. hope you don't abandon it.

Thanks a lot! I certainly won't.

~Guest 105: I think I speak for all the anonymous and account readers when I say "Job well done" and "I can't wait for the next update". To put simply- keep up the good work!

Thanks for the amazing praise. Hope this chapter was worth the wait!

~Guest: Shouldn't Eren also have the War Hammer Titan?

To answer shortly, you are right, but he doesn't in this story.

"Titans" Speech

"Titans" Thoughts

Yellow lightning cracked across the sky. A thunderous clap could be heard from miles away from Eren's and Grisha's location. An enormous blast of wind threatened to blow both father and son away,

while Bertolt and Annie were actually knocked off their feet, the former dropping his gun in the process.

Bones, muscles and connective tissue began to fabricate and build itself up like a tower rising from the ground, forming itself into a moveable body. A strong, durable exoskeleton-as hard as steel-protected the body from all sides. Lastly, two menacing, piercing eyes glared down on Eren and Grisha as the armored titan rose to his full height.

"That's a slight problem," Eren commented while frowning, shielding his eyes from dust still flying his way. He was pretty positive about the situation they were in at the moment; Annie actually had seemed interested in taking them up on their offer. She just needed a bit more persuasion. Understandably so, both Reiner and Bertolt would take more time.

Grisha gritted his teeth while looking at his son worriedly; the armored titan could attack them at any moment. "Eren, now?" he yelled, panic gripping him from every side.

Reiner gave an ear-splitting roar, the ground shaking and cracking at the unbelievable power he was displaying.

"Not yet," Eren responded, narrowing his eyes. He got into a battle-ready stance and found the familiar surge of the founding titan's powers from deep within his body. His eyes flashed with the same thunderous attributes as Reiner's transformation, albeit on a smaller scale, and he gave a loud power cry.

Reiner was preparing to trample both Eren and Grisha like a couple of insects; the couple of meters he had to cover were nothing to him. *"I'll teach you a lesson for trying to trick Annie in betraying us, you devils!"* he thought angrily, foot raised high in the air to make an end to Grisha's and Eren's lives.

He was so blinded by anger that he completely failed to notice the twenty-meter-class that seemingly tackled him out of nowhere,

knocking him off balance as he crashed explosively on his side, kicking up dust and shattering trees completely that were unfortunate enough to be in his way.

Both Annie and Bertolt were coughing to clear out their lungs; scratches and bruises covered their bodies entirely-courtesy of Reiner-as they picked themselves up from the ground. As disoriented as they were, they'd no idea what was happening until they saw a mindless titan on top of the downed armored titan.

"Annie, quickly," Bertolt screamed; knowing if he would transform now he would do serious harm to her, "you have to help out Reiner against these devils! You have to-" multiple high whistles zipped past him like the bullets of a machine gun, until excruciating pain wracked his mind and he felt like he was going to faint. He gurgled helplessly as blood spew forth from his mouth, his eyes wide in surprise, disbelief and total refusal as he looked at what was left of his shredded right arm and shoulder.

"Bertolt!" Annie yelled hysterically, seeing that he was losing consciousness fast as he dropped to the ground, blood flowing from the gaping wounds in his right limb. His arm was torn off completely. Annie gawked at the apparent perpetrator in the distance; another mindless titan-most likely a five-meter-class-who was holding a bunch of rocks the size of baseballs in one of his hands. *"Did he just throw those?"* she thought incredulously, looking back at Bertolt's unconscious form. *"That's impossible! They're mindless titans. Only if you possess the founding titan-"*

That thought died in her throat rather quickly as she looked at Grisha and particularly Eren. The electricity that flashed all around him said enough. *"No way."*

Eren, meanwhile, looked at his handiwork with satisfaction. *"With kind regards of Zeke Yeager,"* he thought as he looked at the immobilized colossus titan. *"Sorry, Bertolt, but I had to. You're way too dangerous to be dealt with right now."* His eyes turned back to

Annie, whose expression radiated realization-realization filled with horror, anxiety but above all shock.

"That's right, Annie. I have the founding titan. So what are you going to do now? Help Reiner, or will you try to appease?" Eren looked back at his father and gave him a nod. "Now!" he yelled with determination dripping from his voice. He bit down on the skin of his wrist while Grisha did the same, following his son's lead.

Two more thunderous claps rang through the area. The earth shook like in an earthquake while two similarly strong-looking titans took shape in the place of Eren and Grisha. If Annie's eyes could have widened more, they would've popped right out of her skull. She rubbed them to make sure if she was seeing things correctly, but her eyes were not deceiving her; in front of her was not one, but *two* attack titans.

Reiner roared like a hungry lion as he threw the mindless titan off of him like it was a small child. It crashed somewhere behind him in a plume of smoke. It had taken a moment for him to realize what was happening until all of his senses started to work normally again. He got up rather clumsily, his whole body stiffening the moment he let his eyes rest on his transformed opponents. *"What the-"*

He couldn't comprehend what he was seeing. It was simply impossible and he wondered if he started to go insane. Two attack titans had taken a battle stance, ready to fight him while only *one* existed.

Eren was smirking all the way. It didn't take a genius to figure out Reiner was completely caught off guard. At the moment, he was their only opponent and that was favorable. Eren had plenty of experience dealing with the armored titan alone, but it was nice to have some back-up. The moment Annie started to transform, he would shift his efforts to her while his father would continue to fight Reiner; he figured his father wouldn't have an answer to her hardening abilities, which he did have.

Just like they had planned, Eren took the lead while his father followed suit. The familiar thrill of battle excited Eren as a rush of adrenaline filled his body; it was almost soothing to him in a sense. His titan form let out a monstrous roar as he charged Reiner with all the energy he could muster. He could feel how his father was close behind him, analyzing their opponent and staying level-headed; he was their line of defense after all and more importantly, responsible for the safety of Dina-the smiling titan who Eren had hidden close by. If something would happen to her, they were in grave danger and had to retreat immediately. But for now, they held all the cards in their hands.

Reiner let out a panicked scream in his mind, the shock that there were two attack titans about to battle him paralyzing him for a couple of crucial seconds. *"What is happening?"* his mind yelled to him anxiously. It took him longer than he would've liked to prepare himself, the anger he was feeling slowly overwhelming all his other senses. *"It doesn't matter,"* he reassured himself then, mentally shaking his head, *"they tried to trick Annie, and for that, they will pay. They won't be able to penetrate my armor anyway, and once Annie and Bertolt transform, it'll be three against two."*

Still, Reiner couldn't shake the feeling something was wrong. That random titan that attacked him out of nowhere; it didn't make sense. He had his arms raised to protect his head while his feet shifted apart, creating a battle stance to prepare himself for the oncoming blows.

Eren growled at the familiar stance, his dash coming to a sudden halt when he'd reached Reiner, preparing to give him a punch straight across his left cheek. His fist hardened to steel-like proportions, all the momentum he had created carrying to his arm to deliver a devastating blow.

Reiner was quick to block with his left arm with the intention to retaliate with his right, assuming his armor would be enough to nullify the punch, only to be shocked once more at the brute force *hammering* his underarm. The strength in Eren's punch made a

sickening crack reverberate through the area, his armor crumbling where he'd struck him. *"That's-"* Reiner thought, hissing in alarm at the damage taken. He couldn't block the follow-up from Grisha, who gave a powerful low-kick at his knee joint.

It luckily didn't do nearly as much damage, but the fact Grisha had attacked and retreated successfully meant Reiner was going to be in trouble very soon if his teammates didn't come to his aid. *"Come on!"* he thought angrily, *"what's taking you guys so long to transform and help me?"*

He had no idea Bertolt was knocked out already and Annie petrified to the bone. She was staring with wide eyes at the unfolding battle, muttering to herself like a lunatic. In hindsight, it was obvious what she should do; all her training had prepared her for such a moment, but nobody had told her there was going to be another way out.

"They really weren't kidding," her mind argued, suppressing her instincts to help Reiner. *"What they offered was real; real salvation for you and all of the Eldians. They can give you a life with your dad. You'd be-normal."* That word, normal, she'd longed for it for as long as she could remember. She wanted that so badly.

Yet, her loyalty to Reiner and Bertolt wasn't something she could throw away. They were her friends; companions who she cared for a lot. She'd sworn to protect them with her life. So, between such a devastating loss so early on in their mission and now these two mysterious attack titans making things extremely difficult, she didn't know what to do.

Reiner, meanwhile, was still waiting for some sort of help when the complete opposite happened. That titan he'd thrown off earlier jumped on his back again, reducing his movement and leaving him wide-open for a counter-attack. Eren took this opportunity to deliver a swift uppercut to Reiner's chin, seriously damaging it while trying to follow it up with a hardened kick against his side.

However, Reiner saw it coming in time. With a bit of luck, he managed to get a good grip on the titan on his back and throw it off of him like a lethal object to Eren. The titan crashed violently against Eren's titan form, knocking him over and interrupting his kick. Reiner roared thunderously with anger, Grisha's second low-kick finding its mark on his knee bringing him out of his stupor as he staggered slightly.

"They've got a clever tactic," Reiner admitted to himself, *"but that mindless titan should keep Eren busy while I'll deal with his dad. It appears he doesn't know how to harden his body, which is an immense relief at least."* Reiner thought he had a lucky break, but the twenty-meter-class didn't even bother to roar at Eren. Instead, it got up alongside him and then faced Reiner again, ready to pounce on him once more.

It then dawned on Reiner while absolute horror gripped his body that either Eren or Grisha had possession of the founding titan. It was the only logical conclusion for this titan's behavior, which was immensely alarming.

The slight thunder that crackled around Eren's body confirmed Reiner's suspicions. The mindless titan attacked with a sudden leap. Reiner had no other option but to stop it with a powerful punch. His fist connected with the titan's face and ripped through it, sending boiling hot blood flying everywhere as its body crashed lifelessly to the ground.

He knew he had no way to protect himself afterwards. Eren's foot was devastating. It struck him right across his jaw, the force breaking it where he'd hit and partly dislocating it. Reiner cursed loudly, his heart beating a mile a minute. His slightly injured knee gave in as well when Grisha connected his foot precisely under his kneecap, bringing him down on one knee.

Reiner knew he was a sitting duck at this point. It was only going to be a matter of time before Eren had rendered his arms useless too, and then it was just a question of getting him out of his titan to finish

him off completely. *"I'm done for,"* Reiner thought fearfully. He doubted if he could've taken on Eren alone at this point, never mind in combination with Grisha and the assistance of the founding titan.

"We've got him," Grisha thought, his happiness overtaking his surprise. His son's crazy plan had worked. They'd saved Shiganshina; countless of Eldian lives would see the dawn of another day, oblivious to the fact they would've been killed if they hadn't intervened.

Just as Grisha started to relax a little, another flash and boom shifted his attention towards his left. He grunted; Annie had finally transformed in her titan form and was running at him threateningly, seemingly having made up her mind. *"And we were so close in convincing her too,"* Grisha thought bitterly. Instead of waiting, he took his son's advice and began to close the distance.

It pained Annie to do this, but the moment she saw Reiner go down, she couldn't abandon him. She knew she'd basically just thrown her only chance away at a normal life. The pain she felt had made her teary-eyed, pictures of her father hugging her flashing through her mind. It fueled her anger, sharpening her focus. Grisha roared at her, intent on tackling her legs and bringing her down.

In a split second, Annie had shifted her weight to her other leg and moved out of the way fluently. She avoided Grisha's tackle so smoothly that he was left utterly surprised. He could only watch as her knee hardened and she counter-attacked by bringing it roughly against his face. It exploded in a heap of blood, flesh and teeth, maiming him and leaving him utterly blind for the time being.

"Dad!" Eren screamed, seeing his father go down. He had to give him time to heal properly, but that would ensure Reiner would be up and running by the time he was done too. *"Why didn't you wait and let me handle her?"* he questioned while gritting his teeth. This was a major setback, especially since there were no mindless titans nearby to aide him except the five-meter-class and Dina. He knew the former wasn't going to do a thing against Reiner and he was never

going to risk the latter. *"We're back at square one. I have to defeat Annie before Reiner is back on his feet again."*

Annie left Grisha's partly defeated titan alone when she'd heard Eren's furious roar. She had expected him to run at her like his father did, but instead, he walked to her slowly, taking on a battling stance she was all too familiar with. *"That's... my battling stance,"* she thought, whispering to herself. Her mind was giving her the weirdest sense of déjà vu she'd ever had. *"Who are you?"*

She waited for Eren to make the first move, but he'd apparently expected that, because he was as patient as she was. They just eyed each other; one pair of eyes questioning everything, while the other pair of eyes seemingly held all the answers. In the background, Reiner was roaring, trying to get up, but his kneecap was locked in place, making him unable to stretch it, and his titan was way too bulky to stand on one foot. He could crawl, but knew that one well-placed kick on his face would leave him utterly defeated. He could do nothing but wait until his knee had healed properly.

Finally, Annie was fed up with waiting. Her agile form made her able to bring her feet high above her head. She hardened it and moved it in a wide arc, trying to connect it with Eren's face. Somewhere in the back of her mind, she knew he was going to dodge it. She was as quick as lightning, but it wasn't enough to land her hit. Eren ducked like he'd expected her attack way in advance and then brought the rest of his body down in a sweeping kick.

He found her left ankle with his foot and saw it twist in a way it wasn't supposed to. Immediately, Annie lost her balance and fell down. She hadn't even hit the ground when Eren's hardened fist landed on her shoulder joint, destroying it into a bloody pulp and making her unable to lift her right arm. In just two quick moves, Annie was in the severe disadvantage.

"He knows my fighting style completely, like he has battled me countless of times before," she realized, smoke rising from the places on her body where Eren had hit her. She could only hope that

she could stall him long enough now with her hardening abilities until she could move a bit again.

Eren didn't let his guard down in the slightest and that was the correct thing to do too. While Reiner couldn't join the battle from up close, he could still do so from a distance away. He had managed to crawl to a decent-sized rock and throw it at Eren with the deadly accuracy of a marksman. Eren was just barely able to dodge the boulder, although it scraped the left side of his stomach, drawing a nasty gash across it which began to bleed immediately.

The distraction left Annie with the opportunity to do some damage herself. She raised her left fist and punched Eren on his calf muscles from her grounded position. The result was a limp that reduced Eren's mobility and hindered him greatly.

"I need to keep Reiner occupied," Eren thought, taking some distance from Annie. The commotion had lured in some more mindless titan to his vicinity, which was exactly what he needed. He commanded the eight giants of various sizes to attack Reiner, who was in the middle of crawling to another rock.

While Reiner was determined, that soon turned into despair when he saw the titans closing in on him. He roared to intimidate them and brought his fist down on the first titan that leaped at him. Just like before, he destroyed its head completely. The others were trickier to deal with. They all grabbed individual limbs and tried to hold him in place, effectively rendering him completely immobile.

With Reiner dealt with for now, Eren looked back at Annie, already formulating a plan to get past her hardening abilities. He walked towards her-not being able to run anymore-and prepared to hit her straight between her ribs. As expected, Annie reacted accordingly and hardened the part of her body where he was about hit her, his attack and her defense canceling each other out. However, it left the rest of her body completely open.

At the same time of his punch, Eren had commanded his five-meter-class to throw all the rocks he had left at Annie. The result was that she got pelted with a barrage of sharp objects that cut her everywhere.

"He's too strong," Annie's panicked mind thought. *"There's got to be some way to shut down the founding titan. He has to have some way to control them. There's no way he or his father are from royal blood, so how?"* Annie let her eyes scan the battlefield, but she couldn't detect anything; it was just an endless sea of rocks and patches of grass. The only thing that stood out to her was a relatively large rock that blocked her view a bit.

Eren attacked her again, his titan's piercing roar warning Annie to harden her ribs once more. The resulting blow was followed with another barrage of rocks. They were absolutely destructive in nature. Her left eye had been gauged; a weird, yellow-ish fluid dripped out of it. Her left ear had been completely torn off, and her whole body was bloody with cuts or chunks of flesh missing.

"She's not going to last much longer, I have to hurry up," Eren thought. Unfortunately, Reiner's victorious roar shattered those hopes. His knee had healed long enough to stand up again; the incredible strength he possessed overwhelmed the titans who were holding him down. They were unable to hurt him due to his armor, and now, too weak to keep him in place.

He began to throw them off his body like petty insects, crushing them under his feet or otherwise beating their bodies into oblivion. Once he was free, he ran at Eren with all the strength he could muster.

Eren's eyes turned to slits; he knew he had to play this smart if he wanted to win. Reiner brought his body back to punch Eren straight in his face. The massive fist was just barely avoided, the momentum Eren had created with his dodge a perfect weapon to use in his retaliation. Smartly, he struck Reiner at the same spot where his feet had hit his jaw, dislocating it completely. With a mighty roar, he

grabbed what remained of Reiner's unhinged jaw, and began to pull, ripping it loose with a sickening crack.

The result was a soft tissue spot in the form of Reiner's mouth that was left completely open. One good punch from Eren there and he would splatter his head from the inside out, which would mean game over for Reiner.

It seemed Reiner knew this too and was backing away fearfully; not only because he was certain now that he couldn't beat Eren alone, but also because Grisha's titan had healed enough to be standing again.

Grisha gave a nod to Eren, indicating he was ready to fight again. He made an apologetic gesture with his hand, which Eren waved off. Eren then pointed at Reiner while he turned his attention back at Annie, who was desperately trying to stand on her weakened ankle. Grisha understood. He roared angrily, ready to face Reiner and beat him once and for all.

"I'm sorry, Annie," Eren thought, *"It's about time I finished this."* Eren commanded his five-meter-class to throw a larger rock at Annie, who expectedly reacted on reflex and hardened her chest area to block it. The rock was pulverized on impact, but Annie also realized with growing horror that it was a fatal error she'd just made, and it would cost her dearly.

She couldn't block Eren's foot; she wasn't fast enough and too weakened to dodge it. It hit her square on the cheek and just kept on going right through it, pulverizing her head and knocking her out of the battle. Her titan fell to the ground, her human form finding the sweet abyss of unconsciousness as she was defeated.

"That's two down," Eren thought, *"only one to go."* He commanded the five-meter-class to retrieve Annie's body out of her titan form. Once it had done so, Eren made it carry her into its jaw to Dina's location, who was still hiding behind the rock where he had left her.

Now that Eren had some time, he looked at the battlefield to search for Bertolt's body, hoping that he hadn't accidentally trampled him in their battle. What he found was his rifle and a lot of blood, leading away in a thick trail. "Oh no," Eren thought, his senses sharp as he eyed the trail and saw Bertolt sitting a little bit farther ahead. He was conscious again, his healing factor working a lot faster than Eren had anticipated.

His face was screaming bloody murder, a knife in one hand while his other hand was still missing. He'd probably seen how he had defeated Annie and that he brought her body behind the rock, which made Eren assume he knew that he had the founding titan too, as well as that Bertolt was going to do everything in his power to get Annie back.

"I can't let you, Bertolt. If you see Dina chances are you know she's important to me somehow. Never mind that you'll probably see her anyway when you transform. You're a big guy, after all."

Bertolt's eyes were entirely fixated on Eren's titan form, absolutely seething with anger for what he had done. Behind Eren he could make out Reiner's weakened titan fighting Grisha's to a stalemate. They weren't going anywhere for the time being, which meant there was only one obstacle in his way.

"I'll kill you, Eren," he thought murderously, the words dripping with venom. *"Manipulating Annie with false promises, stealing her body so you can harvest the female titan, knocking me out before I can transform-that all ends now!"* Bertolt cut himself across the cheek, the yellow thunder that appeared from the heavens blinding everybody for a split second.

Furious winds like a hurricane blasted up dust and pebbles everywhere, which made Eren shield his eyes. The loud explosion that followed almost threatened to knock him off of his feet. Steam erupted from Bertolt's location, rising high into the sky like an active volcano ready to explode. For a moment, only the hissing of the steam could be seen or heard, like the calm before the storm.

Then, Bertolt's face appeared from within the steam. High and mighty he looked down upon the earth below. From his point of view, he could even see the wall in the far distance. But that wasn't what he was interested in at the moment; he was only interested in Eren and getting back Annie's body. *"Huh,"* he thought, *"there's another titan behind that rock; a fairly big one. Why is it crouching down like it tries to remain hidden?"*

The first step he took rumbled the earth to its core. Even Grisha and Reiner had stopped fighting for a second to gape at the humongous giant. *"How are we ever going to bring that down?"* Grisha questioned incredulously. He gave a doubtful glance at his son, who also looked slightly alarmed. It seemed even he was still surprised at how *big* the colossal titan was, no matter how many times he'd seen it.

While he remained a huge threat, Bertolt's speed was severely limited in his titan form. There was no way he could protect himself properly, especially when the small army of mindless titans Eren had commanded to attack was distracting him too. Bertolt saw the titans closing in on him with a perked brow, seemingly not impressed. *"What's that supposed to do exactly?"* he thought with a scowl on his face.

Contracting his muscles, he opened up his secretory glands, which emanated a protective layer of boiling hot steam all around him. It withheld him from moving, but it was an easy defense mechanism to burn all the titans who were clinging to his body to a crisp.

Meanwhile, Reiner felt some confidence return back to him at the sight of Bertolt's titan. Grisha turned out to be trickier to take down than he had anticipated. While he didn't possess any hardening abilities like his son did, he made up for that with raw experience and sheer willpower. The blows he dealt were mainly focused on his joints, weakening them whenever he struck one.

However, he had dealt some big damage as well. There was a gaping wound at Grisha's hip courtesy of a well-placed kick that had

destroyed most of his crista. In turn, Grisha's leg threatened to dislocate with every step he took. Furthermore, he'd torn off his left arm completely. It was just a matter of time before it had grown back, he knew, but the same could be said about the strength in his joints. The only worrisome part was his mouth; his armor didn't grow back even though his jaw was starting to reform. It would stay a weak point for the rest of the battle.

Grisha knew this too, who was constantly wracking his brain for a solution to make an end to this battle as soon as possible. His titan was reaching its end; the damage sustained more than he could heal back properly. *"I have to get in close, it's my only shot,"* he thought. He had held his distance until now because he was afraid Reiner would hit him, and when he did, he hit hard.

Now though, he surprised the armored titan with his sudden dash, his arms stretched out and ready to tackle him. *"Is he going to do the same thing he tried to Annie?"* Reiner thought, stupefied. He couldn't believe Grisha's desperate approach. He held his arms wide, ready to catch the attack titan in his grasp and then beat the shit out of him.

However, the moment Grisha was about to tackle him, he made a fake-out to the left, completely avoiding Reiner's attempt to grab him. Reiner let out a gasp and hissed in panic when Grisha used the momentum to grab him around his throat and lock his feet around his midsection, using his weight and the force of gravity to bring them both down.

The loud crash of both titans hitting the ground kicked up considerable amounts of dust, and from this position, Grisha had a perfect angle to hit Reiner's weak spot. He roared loudly and brought his fist down on his jaw, easily breaking it one hit.

Reiner's eyes widened at the dangerous situation he was in. He couldn't use his left arm with the way how Grisha was holding him and hitting him, while his right arm was locked firmly in place by his leg, making both of them completely useless. He couldn't get up either with the extra weight clinging to his back. The only thing he

could do was lift the upper section of his torso and slam back down, and that's exactly what he did in his desperation.

Grisha continued to punch him repeatedly and in quick succession on his jaw, bone fragments flying everywhere as he felt Reiner lift him up and slam him back down. The massive weight of the titan was quickly threatening to break his spine, which would render his legs useless. If that happened, Reiner would be able to use his arm and then it would be pretty much over for him.

Yet, Grisha felt absolutely confident he was going to win. His punches had completely destroyed Reiner's jaw already. His knuckles weren't faring any better, but that didn't diminish him in the slightest. He kept on hacking away at skin and muscles, blood flying everywhere while Reiner's movements became more stiff, forced and very nervous. He managed to slam down Grisha again, who felt the strength in his legs leaving him. Still, Grisha didn't slow down.

"No, please! I can't!" Reiner thought in panic, managing to free his right arm from Grisha's leg to try and bring down his elbow on his face in a finishing blow. When Grisha saw the threat of Reiner's elbow looming high above him - like the knife of a guillotine that was about to behead him - he gave one final cry and mustered all the strength he could find to ram his fist against what was left of Reiner's face as hard as he could, completely destroying all of his metacarpals in the process.

The effect was instantaneous. All of Reiner's higher functions seized to cooperate. His raised arm fell harmlessly at his side, the damage Grisha had done knocking him out cold. Grisha let a breath escape his mouth that he didn't know he was holding. He had given everything to defeat Reiner; his titan was as good as useless and out of the battle. The only thing that he could move properly was his right arm while only a stump was left of his fist. He had crushed his fingers into dust hitting Reiner over and over again. *"The rest is up to you, Eren,"* he thought, eyeing the idle colossus titan who was still using his steam as a shield. For the time being, he was trapped under Reiner and could only spectate.

Bertolt wasn't sure what was happening below him at the moment. One downside of his steam shield was that he couldn't see at all, never mind that he couldn't move either. He was confident he'd dealt with all the mindless titans for the time being though, and so, stopped his steam.

He would immediately regret that decision.

Eren had been patiently waiting behind Bertolt to drop his form of defense. Once he had done so, the access to his heels was free. Wounding his own hand to make a sharp edge out of his radius bone, he'd hardened it to steel and slashed it right through the tendon that connected Bertolt's calf muscles to his calcaneus. A sharp snap - like a thick cord broke - was the result.

Bertolt let out a yelp as his right leg suddenly gave away. He tried to find his balance, only to hear another loud snap in his left leg and felt that one giving away as well. He went down on his knees with a lot of violence, his large frame falling forwards. He tried to soften the blow by extending his hands, but the resulting crash was still spectacular; both Grisha and Reiner were lucky he didn't land on top of them.

"What happened?" Bertolt babbled to himself incoherently. He tried to push himself back up, which he only succeeded in half; his feet still refused to cooperate, which was very troublesome. He looked around to spot any sign of Reiner, Eren and Grisha. When he couldn't find anybody-largely because of all the dust he had kicked up-he instead focused on what he *could* see, namely the mysterious titan who was still hiding behind the rock about an arm's length away from him.

From his hands and knees position, he couldn't see the five-meter-class who was carrying Annie around. He couldn't even be sure if that titan still had Annie; the smiling titan behind the rock could just as easily be holding Annie. He had to be careful before smashing everything under that rock with the palm of his hand.

First thing was first, he needed more vision. He reached out to grab the rock like it was a drink from the fridge and pulled, the protesting cracks of the rock giving away under the sheer strength of the colossus titan. Lifting up the rock revealed the smiling titan's full body, crouched down and holding Annie's body protectively on its lap.

"Annie!" Bertolt thought, relief washing over him. *"You're all right! Don't worry, I'll get you out of there!"* He reached out to pinch the smiling titan's head between his fingers and squash its head like an overripe fruit, but that's where the titan suddenly reacted and began to run away with Annie in its arms.

"No!" Bertolt stretched his arm desperately to catch the fleeing titan, but it was already out of his reach. He tried to crawl after it, only to feel a very distinct weight settle on his neck. His eyes widened significantly and his movements stopped.

"Forgot about me for a moment?" Eren thought victoriously. He knew he had Bertolt checkmate. He wouldn't be fast enough to get him off of his neck and activating his steam would ensure Dina would be able to escape for sure with Annie. No to mention, it would burn away a lot of his muscles; muscles he desperately needed at the moment. Not that it mattered anymore anyway.

Bertolt lowered his head in defeat. *"Reiner, Annie. I'm sorry."* In the next moment, he could feel the muscles in his neck being torn open forcefully, exposing his human body to the open sky and effectively shutting down his titan.

Eren grabbed Bertolt's body from out of the disintegrating colossus titan, who didn't struggle whatsoever at this point and waited for inevitable death to claim him. Instead, Eren had no such plans with him. He gave Bertolt an apologetic look before knocking him out by shooting a finger against his nose. Eren's whole body relaxed afterwards and for the first time that day, he smiled. *"We did it,"* he thought, laughing as he lowered himself to the ground. *"We actually did it!"*

He made his way to where his father had defeated Reiner. He had already dismounted his titan and was trying to pull out Reiner's body with little success. Eren chuckled and gave his father a hand. Gently, he ripped Reiner's body free from the armored titan and placed both unconscious bodies of the boys on the ground. Finally, he dismounted his own titan with a big, toothy grin on his face.

Grisha's own smile couldn't be wider as he embraced his son in a firm hug. "Great job, Eren!" he praised happily. "We've got all three of them!"

It was almost surreal, but it was true. Not a single soul would be lost today inside the walls. He and his father had stopped the first lethal threat of Marley with stunning success.

"So, what happens now?" Grisha asked unsurely. They had the three shifters, but what were they going to do with them? They couldn't just keep them locked in the basement of their home with the hope Mikasa or Carla weren't going to find out. Besides, the moment they found an opportunity to shift, they would take it. Grisha also needed all the space he had available if he wanted to find a way to take away their titans without killing them.

Eren gave him a grin. "I've thought about that. I know the perfect place to keep the shifters for the time being, and also the right person to keep an eye on them in the meantime."

Not very far from Eren's and Grisha's location, a lone girl had finally witnessed the starry night sky consciously again after a very long time. She felt like every breath she took was pure ecstasy, the feeling of just being *alive* overwhelming her. She couldn't express her gratitude or how lucky she had been that she had run into these warriors of Marley and devoured one of them. While she was repulsed by the idea of killing another human being, it had brought along her salvation. Ymir was finally human again, and it felt *amazing*.

It took some time for all of her memories to resurface. She had sacrificed herself for her Eldian followers back in Marley when the police had made a raid on their illegal cult. Her sentence was to wander utopia forever. How selfless she had been. *"But not anymore,"* she thought. From now on, she would live for herself and nobody else.

That was until she realized she was a long way from home. Her only chance of survival was to reach the wall and take refuge inside, but getting there proved more difficult than she thought. At the dawn of a new day, while admiring the beauty of the sun coming up in the east, she was rudely interrupted by the familiar sound of a titan shifting in the distance.

"The warriors from Marley," she immediately thought, panic taking over her body as she hid herself away. If they found her she was dead meat for sure. She hoped they would go in the direction of the wall, but instead, more titans began to shift and loud roars could be heard, followed by massive clashes that could only indicate they were fighting.

Curiously, Ymir peeked from her hiding spot and looked in the distance at the massive battle that was unfolding. She couldn't believe what she was seeing. Like glue, she kept her eyes on the entire battle until she even saw the colossal titan go down and be defeated.

"Who are those guys?" she whispered to herself. She shook her head; she had to get far away from here before she was found. Preparing to turn around and flee, she was stopped abruptly as she ran into something very sturdy that wasn't there before. Ymir felt her throat tighten while her breathing turned erratic and her hands became cold with sweat. Looking up, she saw the same five-meter-class that had assisted the other two titans in defeating the warriors. All her muscles stiffened as the titan brought both of its hands around her small frame as gently as it could, and then put her on its back. With a scream, he took off in the direction of the two victorious titan shifters.

"Oh no! No no no no no!" Ymir thought anxiously. *"I'm busted. They'll think I'm one of them and then kill me!"* She tried to struggle, but her captor was a lot stronger. Had she known how to shift she would've done so, but since she had no idea how it worked or if she could even do it, that wasn't even an option that rose in her mind.

She was shivering like a log when she finally could make out the faces of the two humans who had captured her. She was surprised one of them was around the same age as she was, if you didn't count the years she had spent as a mindless titan. Gently, the five-meter-class put her down in front of them until the boy took a step forward and smiled slightly.

"I can imagine this must be a nerve-racking experience for you, but you don't have to worry, Ymir. We're your allies, not your enemies," he reassured.

Ymir gasped. He knew her name, but that couldn't be possible; she had been a mindless titan for so long! "Who are you?" she questioned, stammering slightly.

"My name's Eren Yeager and this is my father Grisha Yeager," Eren introduced kindly. "I'm glad you're doing well. I'm sure that after sixty years of wandering around in an endless nightmare you must feel blessed to feel the sun warming your skin once more."

Ymir tried to even her breathing, but this Eren Yeager knew so much about her that it almost seemed like they were old friends. She wanted to scowl and give him a cold, indifferent reply, but she was too emotional at the moment to even find the right words. "I-yes, I do," she admitted, almost whispering.

Eren nodded, his smile widening at Ymir's answer. "Good. I understand you're confused right now, as you probably have no idea what's going on. But don't worry; I'll explain everything along the way to the wall. The most important thing right now is that my father and I can offer you a new life, entirely free from Marley," he promised.

That grabbed Ymir's attention. She looked up at Eren if she could find any insincerity, but there was absolutely none. "You really mean that," she responded, like she couldn't believe it. "But why me?"

"Because we need your help, Ymir," Eren said seriously, "you know things about Marley nobody else inside the walls knows. Besides, you've got the jaw titan right now. You'd make a great addition to our team."

Ymir looked confused. "What do you want me to do then?"

Eren gave her a reassuring glance. "Let's get out of here first. Like I promised, I'll explain everything to you on the way."

And there you have it, people! Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review please! Next chapter the aftermath of the battle. Until then. ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Tell a friend

Just in time, guys! Here I am with chapter four. Thank you so much for the massive support I've gotten so far. I hope you'll enjoy! :D PS: planning this story is kinda hard. Since the manga is still running, I've to change things on the fly. Anybody who has read chapter 107 will know what I'm talking about.

~Seira: I love your plot and I really hope you continue this story cause it's amazing!

Thank you! I definitely will. :3

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

For some reason, Eren was more nervous than he would've imagined. He and his father had done the most difficult part of their mission already, so why was facing Annie, Reiner and Bertolt in a normal conversation almost impossible for him? Eren shook his head. He had to be convincing if he wanted to succeed. At the moment, he was standing in front of the three shifters who were all still unconscious.

Ymir was standing next to him, a sliver of concern showing on her face. He had told her everything she needed to know when they'd traveled back to wall Maria. Needless to say, she had needed a moment to process everything, never mind that she had a bit of trouble believing it all. But like Eren had expected, she was alone and scared, and thus decided to trust him for the time being. He just had to keep treating her with respect to make that trust grow.

"It's going to be all right," Eren said to himself more than to Ymir, but she still responded hesitantly.

"Are you sure I'm the right person for this? I just ate one of their friends after all." Her concern hadn't diminished in the slightest, even though all three warriors were tied up and weren't able to shift into their titan forms.

"It'll be for a little while, at least until my father has found a way to extract their powers without killing them. Besides, you're the only person who knows about Marley inside these walls beside the royal family. And I can't leave them behind without any supervision either." Eren paused as he looked around the plain room they were in. Honestly, he couldn't have wished for a better spot to keep the three shifters until he had convinced them to join his cause.

They were exactly twenty-five meters up and around two meters inside wall Maria. Eren smiled as he reminisced about the fact the wall was actually hollow at some points from the inside. *"Looks like the hiding spot you used against us is going to be your temporary prison for now, Reiner and Bertolt,"* he thought, nodding in satisfaction. The room was fairly large with enough space to walk around. Eren had provided enough food and water for Ymir-who was going to keep an eye on the three shifters-and the three shifters themselves to last a few days.

Plenty of oxygen streamed into the multiple vents, and there was even a spot to go outside to get a breathtaking view of the island and all the mindless titans roaming around. Eren nodded in satisfaction and then eyed Ymir again. "I'll come back tonight to check up on you," he promised, "and then I'll slowly teach you how to shift and use the jaw titan effectively. If one of the warriors manages to break free-which I doubt-don't hesitate to kill him or her. You'll be able to shift while they don't. At least, not immediately. Be merciless. One life doesn't equal thousands of others."

Ymir nodded, although she wasn't sure she was able to do it if it ever came to that. Eren probably knew, because he had built this room

cleverly. Annie, Reiner and Bertolt were all tied up separately; not far away enough so they couldn't see each other, but they weren't able to reach. Likewise, a line on the ground indicated the distance the warriors could walk forward and thus effectively reach with their legs. As long as Ymir didn't cross it she would be fine.

There were no sharp edges or objects in the room to break free from the restraints, neither a way for them to shift. They were trapped in such a way that they were unable to leave, but not unable to move around.

"So, what will you do now?" Ymir asked Eren curiously. She was still amazed he was able to stop such a destructive threat before it could've happened. It made his story that he was from the future all the more believable.

"I'm going to wait until they wake up and try to knock some sense into them," he responded seriously. "We're all Eldians. I don't want to kill three innocent children who've been brainwashed by Marley just because they don't know any better. Hopefully, they'll understand sooner than later." He pointed at the female titan in the room. "Particularly Annie was intrigued by my offer. With a bit of luck, I'll have her convinced by the end of today."

"And what if it's a trick?" Ymir whispered back. "What if they say they want to join you just so they'll be free and wreak havoc anyway?"

"I know all three of these people very well," he responded, "Annie will be the first to give in. Not only doesn't she believe a word what Marley is saying, but she also knows I'm telling the truth and can possibly give her what she truly wants. Besides, I need a way to bring back Dina-" Eren motioned with his hands to refer to the smiling titan. "-so the payment of joining me is giving up her powers. If she's willing to do that, I know I can trust her. The boys are going to need more time, but once Reiner is convinced, Bertolt will follow quickly afterwards no problem."

Ymir was pretty impressed. "You really thought about this, didn't you?" she said in amazement. "You really want to restore Eldia back to its long lost glory without losing a single soul."

Eren nodded silently. "We've been suppressed long enough. Too many lives of Eldians were lost. Marley is going to pay for what they did; but not in the same way we've been paying. When Paradis is titan free and I've gotten rid of all the corrupt politicians around here, we'll claim Marley and make it a peaceful country where Eldians and Marleyans will learn to live as one. It's going to take some time, but we'll take it slowly. The world will learn we're not devils, and once everything is set and done, the power of the titans will be no more. They'll be destroyed, never to be used again. I'm going to personally make sure of that."

Ymir smiled, but then gasped when she saw Reiner stir. Sure enough, he began to open his eyes groggily. Eren stiffened a bit, but held his friendly composure. Reiner looked around in confusion and groaned; he'd taken quite some damage before the lights went out, so Eren assumed his healing joints were pretty sore. It took a moment before his eyes set on Eren and they widened in recognition. Fear, panic and anger all set in at once.

Eren could see these powerful emotions swirl in Reiner's eyes. The armored titan suppressed a growl and tried to stand up, only to stumble and fall back down; a combination of him being tied up and his joints not working fully yet. He lowered his head in defeat and refused to open his mouth for the time being.

Likewise, Eren wasn't making a move yet either. He waited patiently until Bertolt and Annie had woken up too. It didn't take long before Bertolt's eyes had flicked open with a big gasp as well, like he had been holding his breath for too long. He panted while his eyes only displayed pure terror. Apparently, he hadn't been dreaming pleasant.

When he saw Eren standing there, however, only anger was present in his face. "You," he said lowly, "I'll kill you. I'll kill you until there's nothing left!"

It was odd how much Bertolt reminded him of himself when he was younger. It made Eren pity him. It wasn't too late yet to change his mind; it would just take a lot of patience on his end, Eren was sure of it.

Bertolt continued to make empty threats while he struggled furiously against his binds. Reiner ignored his best friend and continued to keep his head turned low. Both looked utterly broken.

Finally, Annie reached the land of the conscious as the final member of the group. She didn't make a sound whatsoever; it was like she had been wide awake for a while now when she opened her eyes. Most notably, she didn't display any resentment whatsoever when she locked her eyes with Eren. He only saw utter sadness and bitterness; she probably thought she'd blown her chance with him when she helped out her friends in battle.

Eren was silent for a little while longer before he cleared his throat. A friendly smile appeared on his face. "I apologize for the rough treatment and the condition you are all in," he began kindly. "I hope you understand I can't have you guys shifting and still destroying wall Maria." He paused and eyed each warrior individually. "How are you feeling? Is there anything I can get you?"

Bertolt had shut his mouth, his face murderous while low growls came out of his throat. He was like a wounded animal, but he would be lying if he said he wasn't somewhat surprised at how Eren was talking to them.

Reiner had lifted his head, the tears that had threatened to roll down his cheeks having stopped as his face displayed utter confusion.

The only one who didn't seem surprised was Annie. Instead, a sliver of hope appeared in her eyes. That was a very good sign for Eren; one he hoped that would grow.

He continued when none answered-understandably so. "I'm afraid this is where you'll be staying for the time being, but don't fret. Ymir

here," he pointed at the female standing next to him, who stiffened considerably, "will keep you company in my absence."

"Where is here?" Reiner whispered. His voice had lost all of its power; he'd accepted very quickly that they had failed and that he was a prisoner now.

"We're inside wall Maria," Eren answered honestly. "It's the only place where I can keep you safely so no harm will be done to you."

Bertolt let out a cynical laugh. "No harm?" he hissed. "You devils have probably planned to torture us so we'll spill every bit of information you can use against Marley. It's the only reason why you haven't killed us yet, isn't it?" he spat, demanding Eren that he would tell the truth.

Eren shook his head. "No, Bertolt. Why would I torture you when I already know everything that's going to happen? I knew about your arrival, did I not?"

He grumbled, but couldn't find a counterargument to that. He wanted to shout that the information of their arrival was leaked somehow, but Marley had been utmost careful. Moreover, Eren and his father *both* had the attack titan on top of Eren having the founding titan too. It just didn't make any sense.

"Eren," Annie called, her curiosity piqued by his last statement. "Can I ask how it's possible for you to know everything?" Her eyes were back to that analytical gaze he was so used of her. She was calculating every move he made; trying to find the least bit of dishonesty if she could.

Eren slowly nodded his head. He'd thought this over carefully, but feeding his potential allies lies wasn't the way to go about things, especially if he wanted them to trust him. "It's because I'm from the future," he explained simply.

Bertolt snorted loudly. "You want us to believe such obvious lies? We're not gullible!" he yelled, his anger flaring up again. "You're trying to brainwash us, aren't you? So you can use us against Marley! We'll never let that-"

"He's telling the truth," Annie interrupted him, effectively shutting him up. Bertolt was gawking at her incredulously and even Reiner gasped in shock.

"Annie?" Reiner whispered, "what are you saying?"

If she was completely honest with herself, she didn't know why she would believe such a ridiculous statement either, but for some reason, it just fit. His knowledge, the two attack titans, the fact he knew her fighting style even though they'd never met and his experience in controlling the founding titan like he'd done it for years all would be explained this way. Eren was being dead serious about it too, so he was either crazy and believing his own lies or being extremely honest-especially the latter told her Eren had no ill intention with them at all. If anything, it gave her even more hope his offer would somehow still stand.

"I know what I'm saying, Reiner," she concluded finally. "Marley has always been full of shit. Maybe you don't believe that yet, but I'm not easily fooled. What Eren is saying is the craziest story I've ever heard, but I believe him based on what I've seen so far."

Bertolt guffawed, a breathless laugh escaping his mouth. "Marley full of shit?" he repeated, like he couldn't believe that had come out of Annie's mouth. "You're crazy! We've been tasked with such an important mission. The trust Marley has put on our shoulders pierces the sky! They gave us-mere Eldians-a chance to become honorary Marleyans if we succeed! Do you believe that's all a lie!?"

"It's based on false pretenses," she whispered back, the things she'd thought for so long finally leaving her mouth. "Even if we become honorary Marleyans, people will not look at us differently."

Bertolt's jaw threatened to drop, his body refusing to feel the treacherous hate that welled up for Annie. Reiner, in the meantime, chuckled while sweat started to accumulate on his forehead. That'd normally happen to Bertolt, but the same feeling of anxiety he felt on the battlefield a few hours prior overwhelmed him again. It was the fear of losing Annie.

"So what?" he said, some of his willpower returning through his desperation. "We should just believe this devil then? And then what?"

Annie looked back at Eren hopefully, who nodded his head in confirmation. "My offer still stands. I require your help in changing some crucial things around here. With your power backing me up, I'm certain I'll succeed. You'll help restore the *real* glory of the Eldian race, as well as help me spread the real story of Eldia and Marley." Eren paused and then reached out his hand like a guardian angel. "Please, let me help you."

For the second time in his entire life, Eren saw a small smile creep up Annie's face. It was as rare as a harvest moon, but twice as beautiful. He knew he had Annie convinced then and there.

"Pretend for a moment that I accept your offer, Eren," Annie said, her voice trying to remain stoic but unable to hide a hint of excitement, "Will you just let me go?"

"I will, but on one condition," Eren responded, his nervousness building again. This was going to decide whether or not he would have a very strong ally at his side and be able to bring back Dina again. "You'll have to give up your titan powers. Not only out of a precaution, but also because I'm trying to bring back a very important person of royal blood."

Alarm bells went off in Annie's head immediately, her excitement dwindling down to her usual stoic expression. "Don't believe him, Annie," Reiner yelled just for good measure, "this is obviously a trick!"

"I understand it sounds like a trick, but please think about it," Eren begged. "What do I possibly gain by getting the titan powers out of you willingly as opposed to killing you?"

Again, Annie saw or heard no dishonesty coming from Eren, which frustrated her a little. Giving up her powers was the last thing she would do, and the question remained how Eren was going to get them out without killing her.

When she stayed silent, Eren nodded his head. "Please give it some thought. I'll be back tonight. In the meantime, you guys can get acquainted with Ymir." He gave her a reassuring pat on her back as he made his leave. He saw how her mind was full with uncertainties, but he trusted she'd do well and get acclimated in no time. Ymir was a strong woman, after all.

Once Eren had finally reached his home, the morning had made place for the afternoon. The sun was harsh on his face and neck, but he knew that Mikasa was going to be a lot harsher. His mom was doing the laundry outside, humming a happy tune while his father had locked himself up in his basement. He'd given his father all the info he knew about how the power of the titans worked. Now it was up to him to find some sort of solution.

"Hi mom, I'm back!" Eren called out happily.

Carla turned around and smiled. "Hi, sweetie," she greeted back, the relief in her voice almost unnoticeable. She was a pro at hiding her worry, something that wasn't unjustified in this situation; both she and Mikasa knew that whatever they had done was something very dangerous. "I'm glad you're back! Lunch is almost ready. You can help out Mikasa if you'd like?"

He'd rather not even though he loved her with every fiber of his being. Facing her wrath-no matter what age she was-was always a scary experience. He knew how to deal with it, obviously, but if he

could avoid it, he would do so. Unfortunately, he had to face her sometime.

"Sure, mom! I'll go help her out!" Eren made his way into his home until he'd reached the kitchen. There, Mikasa was already busy setting the table with various sandwiches, fruits and drinks she'd made. Her eyes lit up for a moment when she saw that Eren was completely fine, but then scoffed and continued her job without so much of a greeting.

"Hi, Mikasa," Eren greeted her anyway. He knew the best way to approach the situation was to talk about it immediately rather than avoiding eye-contact or pretending nothing was wrong whatsoever. "I'm sorry if I made you worry," he apologized, getting the necessary cutlery and glasses to go along with the food and drinks. "I understand that you're mad at me and I deserve that wholeheartedly. I just hope you can forgive me."

Mikasa stopped what she was doing and looked him in the eyes. "Eren," she said sternly, "what's gotten into you? Ever since last night you haven't been acting like your usual rash self. You almost seem like a different person!"

Her concern was logical. Eren didn't deny the fact he'd changed a lot; everybody did when they grew up. It must be worrisome for Mikasa seeing him so differently. "That's because I have," he admitted to her. "Honestly, it has been very hectic for me too." He laughed awkwardly while shaking his head. "I've got so much on my head that I feel it's going to spin and make me dizzy."

Mikasa's gaze softened and her hand found his shoulder supportively, almost lovingly the way how she would often do when they were older and had started a romantic relationship. "Eren, please tell me what's going on," she begged. "I don't understand. Your dad wouldn't tell me a single word either and hasn't come out of his basement the moment he returned."

It was the utter powerlessness in her voice that Eren wanted to console her. One of the most important things in her life was being able to protect him no matter what, but now, so suddenly, something was threatening it and she didn't have the slightest clue who or what it was. It made her feel tiny and scared.

Eren hugged her closely, which she reciprocated by letting her head rest on his shoulder with a slight snuffle. "I promise to tell you everything tonight, all right? Now is not the right time. Please tell mom as well. You both have every right to know what's going on, and dad and I will explain, but it's not going to be easy to believe."

"I'll believe anything you'll say to me," she replied stubbornly, secretly enjoying Eren's affections a little more than she would've cared to admit.

Eren smiled and gave her a soft kiss on her cheek, which made her gasp while the cutest blush formed on her face. She was simply too adorable. "How about after lunch we meet up with Armin and go on an adventure?"

Eren remembered whenever they hung out he would call it 'going on an adventure.' They'd often pretend they were outside the walls, exploring the world and its many different environments they only ever read about in books, but never knew were real or not. He missed those days and it was a great way to ease his mind a bit.

Mikasa gently nodded her head in agreement, feeling a lot better with herself knowing that Eren was going to tell what was going on tonight. Her worries ebbed away little by little. That kind smile of his was so addictive; it gave her a funny feeling whenever he flashed it at her and it made her want to hug the scarf he gave her like a big teddy bear.

She suppressed those urges and instead continued to set the table in preparation for lunch, wondering what Eren was going to tell her that possibly wouldn't make her believe was he said. *"Oh, hey, Mikasa! My dad and I are actually titans in disguise."* She giggled

inwardly at those thoughts, having no idea how accurate her guess truly was.

Eren had joined his father in the basement after he'd returned from hanging out with Armin and Mikasa. Lunch was delicious and so nostalgic that Eren had trouble keeping it together for a few times, not to mention, just running around in the meadows of his youth with Armin and Mikasa. Now that he had emptied his mind, he was aiding his father however he could while recounting his conversation with the three shifters.

"I see," his father mused, "so we have a chance that Annie will actually help us out? That's incredible!" He was genuinely happy, but it was hard to show it when his mind was busy finding a way to extract the power of the titans without killing the host. He had made some good progress already with Eren's help, but didn't have anything solid working yet.

"It is," Eren agreed. "She's not only a very capable fighter, but she'll also be our ticket to bringing Dina back."

"Speaking of Dina," Grisha said. "How is she doing? Have you checked up on her?"

"I did when I left the three shifters in the care of Ymir. She's doing well as I expected," Eren responded. They had left the smiling titan outside the wall with the order to remain where she was until Eren had told her otherwise. She complied effortlessly, but just to be sure, Eren had built a protective wall all around her which she couldn't escape from and ensured any other wandering titans couldn't hurt her either. She'd stay there until they had the female titan, and with a bit of luck on both ends, that would be by tonight.

"I promised Mikasa I was going to tell her what was going on tonight-mom too," he added. "Which means I need your help in explaining."

Grisha grunted, rubbing his temple tiredly. "She forced you to tell, didn't she?" he mumbled while continuing to recalculate the formulas he'd used.

Eren smiled. "Sorta. She has a way to convince me. Maybe it's because I married her," he admitted.

This time, Grisha laughed. "Why am I not surprised by this? That girl had a crush on you the moment you wrapped that scarf around her neck. Curiously, when did you finally figure that out?" he teased his son, knowing how oblivious he could be.

This time, Eren blushed a bit in embarrassment while rubbing the back of his head awkwardly. "Too late; way too late, dad," he confessed. "It was so obvious in hindsight, but I'm ashamed to say it wasn't the most important thing in my life at that moment, so I never took much notice in it."

"You've got that from me," Grisha responded with a big smile. "How women like Dina or Carla even took notice in me, I'll never understand."

Both father and son laughed at that. Sometimes, the biggest mystery on earth weren't the titans, but the women instead.

"I do plan on telling them everything, though," Eren continued seriously. "I want to get this over with as soon as possible."

Grisha grumbled, but nodded his head in agreement anyway. "That'll be for the best." He gave his son another smile. "It's getting time to prepare dinner. Go help your mom and Mikasa. I'll finish things up here. I should have something ready later tonight. I can't guarantee it'll be stable or if it will even work, but it's the only chance we've got."

"I know, dad. But you know what?" Eren said confidently, "For some reason, I don't doubt for a second it's not going to work." He couldn't explain why, but it was a gut-feeling, like something inside him told him it was going to be all right.

"The scariest part is that I've got the same feeling," Grisha replied.
"It's the same feeling that made me believe you were from the future and why I went along with your crazy plan. So far, it has worked out, so I'm not going to question it."

"Maybe it's the curse of Ymir?" Eren thought as he made his way upstairs while his father continued to wrap things up before dinner was ready. Whatever it was, it gave Eren the resolve to go on, which was all that he needed.

**That's it for now, people! Did you like it, love it, hate it? Please review! I love to read your thoughts and respond to them! :D
Next chapter in three weeks from now. Until then. ^^**

~Syrup-Waffle

The curse is strong in this one

Chapter 5 is here, people. Thank you guys again for the massive support on this fic so far! :D I hope you'll enjoy!

~Misuri Hitchako: I feel like I've been left hanging. I need more. Four chapters isn't enough to satisfy this fanfiction reading.

I agree. So here is the new chapter for you to enjoy.

~Guest: Great story.

Thank you!

~lavamob102gmail: Can you continue this book please?

Yes, I can, and I will.

~Guest: Love it! Keep bringing it!

Glad you are, and absolutely!

"Titans!" Speech

***"Titans!"* Thoughts**

Grisha's basement was dark except for a few candles flickering their light here and there. The air smelled of sweat, sawdust and alcohol. Inside, both father and son looked at the concoction he'd created. It was a light purple in color and completely odorless. Eren glanced at his father nervously, who was sweating profusely. Despite their gut-feeling earlier, they started to have second doubts.

"Remind me again how this works?" Eren asked his father, his hands as cold as his back at the moment. To be honest, he was more afraid of this potion failing than he had been facing Annie, Reiner and Bertolt.

"Well," Grisha said dryly, swallowing to get some saliva back in his throat. "Based on what you've told me and what I've found out, the power of the titans mixes with the spinal fluid of the host which goes all the way to the basal ganglia of the cerebral cortex. It connects itself with the bigger proteins which are basically the brain's building blocks to restore itself and make new connections with the billions of neurons inside.

"This potion," Grisha continued, "will break down those connections and concentrate the power of the titans on the lower spine, around L2-L3, which then could easily be removed with a clean syringe. Since the power of the titans is denser, it should theoretically be possible, but since you're destroying neurons inside the brain, I don't know if the effect will be similar to a stroke, which may leave me with hemiplegia or even kill me."

Grisha eyed Eren worriedly. "Never mind the other hundreds of things that could possibly go wrong. But, it's the only thing I could make on such a short notice. My time is almost up anyway. If this works, I'll lose my attack titan-but I'll also lose the curse of Ymir. It just means I can't receive another titan for the rest of my life."

Eren knew the consequences all too well. It wasn't like they had much choice in the matter anyway. "All right," he said, breathing in loudly. "Let's do this then."

Grisha nodded and took off his dress shirt, leaving his upper body exposed to the syringe he had filled with the purple liquid. Wordlessly, he handed his son the syringe and turned his back to him. "You have to shoot it directly into my spine, around C7," Grisha explained while bending his neck. "Do you see the most prominent protruding spine from my neck area? That's C6. Palpate it and then

go down. Make sure you make good difference between the two to locate C7 correctly."

Eren did as he was told, double-checking to make sure he had the correct spine between his fingers. "I got it," he said resolutely.

Based on where Eren was palpating, Grisha had to agree. "Now comes the hardest part. You have to stick the needle between the two spines and go around two centimeters deep. Then inject the fluid upwards. Be sure to clean my skin first with some alcohol and make sure no air is in the syringe," his father advised him.

Eren grabbed some soft cotton and dipped it into a bit of alcohol to clean his father's skin. Next, he pressed a little bit on the syringe to let some fluid escape, which ensured there was no air left in it. "All right, dad, here I go," Eren stated, slowly bringing the needle to his father's skin. Oddly enough, Eren's hands weren't shaking even though he was incredibly nervous right now; it was like they were made of steel. He stuck the needle inside his father spine and slowly pushed it deeper to what he guessed to be around two centimeters. Not thinking twice, he shot the purple liquid inside and then retracted the needle. He watched his father expectantly, who didn't react very much yet, until his whole spine began to glow purple.

The sudden muscle spasms from Grisha and his painful hissing had Eren's pulse speeding up considerably. He watched with growing worry as his father thrashed about, grunting and groaning while his spine continued to glow purple.

After five minutes of this, Eren was afraid he might not make it after all, but then the spasms slowly began to cease until only his panting remained. "Dad! Are you okay?" he yelled a bit too loudly. He watched how his father turned his head and groaned painfully.

"That... was not pleasant whatsoever," he grumbled. He felt like he'd run a marathon backwards. His head was throbbing and he felt lightheaded and weak.

"Did it work?" Eren asked, not sure based on what he had seen.

"Only one way to find out," his father responded. With some help from Eren, he was able to turn around on his stomach. He gave the same directions on how Eren had to stick a clean syringe in his lower back like he'd done in his neck. This one had to go a little bit deeper, and with some effort, Eren filled it up with a clear liquid straight from Grisha's spine. "This is *it*, " he whispered, his smile contagious as he eyed his father! "This is it! We did it!"

"Now hold on," his father said before celebrating with him, gently getting into a sitting position. "I have to look at it first. It might just as well be normal spinal fluid." Though it definitely looked different than normal spinal fluid, Grisha wanted to be sure just in case.

"How long will that take you?" Eren asked curiously. He had promised to meet up with Ymir soon, and the sooner he knew it worked, the sooner he could take it with him. After all, if Annie agreed to his proposition, they could get Dina back today.

"Hold on," Grisha grunted, "the side effects are pretty disorientating. I need some time until I feel better. But I'm sure it will not take me no longer than thirty minutes to be sure." Grisha smiled. "If this is it, then we've effectively shut down the curse of Ymir!"

Eren almost couldn't believe it. He idly wondered why they had been so lucky. He believed it was partly because of his knowledge on the subject and partly because of his father's incredible intellect, yet he knew that wouldn't have been enough to figure it out so soon. It was almost as if the curse itself had been helping them out.

Shaking his head, Eren patiently waited until his father had found some strength in his limbs again to test the fluids they'd extracted.

As it turned out, they'd successfully removed Grisha's attack titan from his body. Eren was ecstatic with the news; as was his father. It meant they'd saved him, and they were capable of saving Dina too!

Right now, Eren was practicing with Ymir how to control the jaw titan. He hadn't met up with the shifters yet, but Ymir told him they were doing okay, albeit that they had a bit of a falling out over some heated arguments. Eren could make an estimated guess what those were about.

"That's good, Ymir, you're doing great," Eren praised her while she was getting used to her new body. Apparently, she hadn't much trouble with the shifting part as he had in the past, but rather with controlling her actions consciously. Even though she spent the last sixty years in that form, the actions were all unconscious.

"It's funny to notice how implicit actions are rather easy for her, while explicit actions are a lot harder," he thought. As a highly trained soldier, Eren was pretty experienced in giving different exercises and also knowledgeable on different training methods in controlling one's body.

"All right, Ymir, rather than reaching out with your arms, why don't you give me a hand?" Eren emphasized the action by offering his own hand. Ymir immediately responded and reached out her arm with stunning success, much to her shock.

"I did it!" she thought happily. It was frustrating if your body didn't listen to your commands. Bit by bit, however, her movements started to come out more controlled.

"There you go!" Eren was amazed at her progress already, "but don't let us get carried away now. How about we call it a day and practice some more tomorrow?"

Ymir nodded at that and exited her titan, unable to keep a smirk from her face. "Did you see that? I think I'm starting to get the hang of it!" She was visibly excited, and with good reason too. Guarding three shifters most of the day when you actually didn't know how to shift yourself if something went wrong was pretty scary. Ymir didn't dare tell them she was the one who ate their friend on top of that.

"You certainly are! I'm proud of you! In a few weeks you'll be ready to help me with my next mission of changing some politics around here," Eren said in satisfaction.

Ymir nodded, albeit reluctantly. She wasn't that confident in her skills yet, especially when she'd seen most of Eren's battle with his dad against the warriors of Marley. Luckily, Eren had promised she was there purely for back-up and intimidation factor. Guns wouldn't harm them, and canon blasts would be focused on him, which he could easily block if he hardened his fists. It'd be another confrontation where they'd try to reason first before using violence. Ymir had the growing suspicion the original founding titan holder wasn't going to listen.

"Ymir?" Eren said. "I'd like to see the three shifters now. Could you please give me a moment of privacy with them?"

"Oh, of course!" she responded. Ymir wanted to hug him out of appreciation for everything he'd done for her so far, but hesitated, which Eren thought was pretty adorable for a lady he knew that was as hard as steel. Still, her behavior wasn't anything strange. All the people he'd known for so long were a lot younger; merely children becoming young teenagers. He had to admit himself his body was making him *feel* like he truly was not older than twelve years.

The smile on Eren's face was contagious, though. Ymir couldn't help but blush a bit and smile back. He grabbed her hand and pulled her in a soft hug, which she now had no trouble reciprocating. "Thank you," Eren said gently.

"No, thank *you*, " she whispered back, her voice smooth and loving. "You're giving me a new chance at life."

"Anything for an old friend, Ymir," he responded with a grin. This made her smile widen significantly, the corners of her lips trembling with contained laughter. "It's still odd to think you're from the future," she admitted, amusement written all over her face.

"Honestly, I have moments that I think this is all a big dream," he admitted. *"And that I'm really dead and this is the afterlife,"* he added somberly, but didn't think that out loud. Shaking his head, he let go of Ymir. "Anyway, I'll be with Annie, Reiner and Bertolt if you need me."

She nodded and waved him goodbye while Eren made his way through the labyrinth of tunnels inside wall Maria to reach the fairly big room where the warriors of Marley were being held prison at the moment.

When he entered, all three shifters were sitting down on the cushions he'd provided, idly minding their own business. They were acclimating a little, it seemed, which was good. "Good evening, Bertolt, Reiner and Annie," he greeted them kindly. "I hope Ymir has treated you well."

"She has, Eren, thank you," Annie replied without hesitation, which elicited a little growl from Bertolt and utter silence from Reiner.

"I'm glad to hear that." He nodded his head. "Is there anything I can get you guys to make it more comfortable here? I've brought a plethora of books with me that you can read," he offered them.

Bertolt muttered something under his breath while Reiner nodded solemnly. "Actually," Annie said, her voice resolute, "there's something I want to tell you, Eren."

"Oh? Have you thought about my offer?" he said, his excitement and curiosity growing exponentially.

Annie nodded her head. "I'm ready to join you in your cause. If you want to take away my titan-though I'm not sure how you'll accomplish that-then go ahead." Her answer was loud and clear, probably on purpose because both Reiner and Bertolt refused to look at her. She had, in fact, thought about it all afternoon, much to the growing frustration of both Reiner and Bertolt. They'd tried everything in their power to talk her out of it, but in the end, her mind was set.

She knew they'd see her as a traitor, that much was obvious, but with due time, she realized they would probably come to understand her and maybe even admit she was right all along. After all, she saw the doubts in both Reiner's and Bertolt's resolve that Marley was perfect when she'd easily countered all their arguments.

More importantly, however, was that she *knew* if she joined Eren's team she could accomplish what she truly wanted; a normal life with her father.

Eren at the moment couldn't be more ecstatic. It was like all the pieces of the puzzle were slowly falling in their place. The timing couldn't have been more perfect and he bowed deeply. "Thank you, Annie. I promise you won't ever regret placing your trust in me."

She nodded her head and walked forwards as far as her binds allowed her to. "What will you do now, Eren?" she questioned him. She doubted he was just going to let her go, especially since she still had her titan and could potentially shift into it if she wanted.

However, Eren surprised her by actually getting into her reach. He slowly started to loosen her limbs, his eyes bearing nothing but pure trust as he was doing his job. She gasped; her body tense as she could move her hands again. All the while, he was meticulously removing the rest of her binds, completely vulnerable to her, but she never even thought of attacking him.

When he was done, he moved back and offered her his hand. "You're free now. Please come with me so we can remove your titan, Annie," Eren spoke kindly.

The amount of trust he put in her was insane, so much so that even Reiner and Bertolt were surprised at how crazy the scene looked. Annie smiled inwardly. "*Eren. You are the real deal, aren't you?*" She took his hand without hesitation and walked after him into another room, where Eren motioned for her to sit down on a simple wooden stool he'd placed there.

She complied as Eren explained to her what was going to happen. He'd rather have it done by his dad, but he was still way too weak to do such a procedure. Since Annie was still a kid and also female, his father had warned him not to use the same amount he'd used on him, as that might prove to be fatal to her. The last thing he wanted was to kill Annie now.

When he was done explaining, she offered him her back, so Eren could start the process of removing her titan.

"So this is Dina, the woman with royal blood?" Annie asked as she watched the smiling titan who was idly starrng up at the sky. Eren had removed her female titan with stunning success. At the moment, she was way too weak to walk herself, so Ymir was supporting her. Eren had insisted that she should take it easy and rest, but Annie was persistent and wanted to meet the woman who was going to inherit her powers.

"She's also my stepmother," Eren added jovially, "and Zeke's mother." Especially when he revealed that last part, Annie seemed surprised.

"Who's Zeke?" Ymir asked, not being familiar with the name. He apparently was somebody important and also Eren's half-brother to boot, but in what way he was important, she had no idea.

"He's the current beast titan," Annie responded, "and also my supervisor," she added and then paused. "Well, he was my supervisor, now I'm not really sure anymore," she admitted with a shrug. "But I'm sure you knew this already, Eren?"

He nodded his head. "I know who's holding the cart and war hammer titans too. Besides that I also know all the intricacies of both Paradis' and Marley's political structures. I won't be the right person to change those, but I've already gotten a few names in my head who could possibly aid me with that." He shook his head. "Anyway, you don't have to worry about Zeke right now, Ymir. He's scheduled to

come around in two years or so," he then gave Annie a winning smirk, "and, with a bit of luck, you'll be *his* supervisor when the time comes around."

Annie perked a brow, but couldn't deny that the thought sounded very appealing in her mind. "You want to recruit Zeke too?" She was kind of amazed at the lengths Eren was willing to take to accomplish his goal.

"I do and I will. I already accomplished that feat once. Never were able to recruit you guys, though," he revealed and left it at that. "Anyway, Dina's the reason I was able to control all those mindless titans in our battle. Having the founding titan in combination with somebody of royal blood nearby gives me that feat. This makes her immensely valuable. And since I've never met my stepmom personally, this is kinda exciting for me too," Eren admitted somewhat sheepishly.

With no effort, that familiar yellow thunder crackled all around Eren's body and made the smiling titan move. She reached out to the vial which contained the female titan and brought it to her mouth to swallow it whole. At first, nothing happened since the vial needed to be digested first, but when that eventually had happened, the smiling titan gave a soundless scream and began to shrink in size.

Bones, muscles and connective tissues were being dissolved into nothing until only a petite woman remained where the smiling titan once had stood. She was lying on her side in the fetus position. She had beautiful blonde hair and a fair skin; Eren guessed her to be around 5'2".

She fluttered her eyes open daintily, like she was waking up from a long slumber. In some sense, that was pretty true. Her eyes adjusted to the limited light the outside world provided to her. It had become pretty dark already, so she could only make out silhouettes, which made her panic and thrash about as she tried to control her muscles in fleeing.

She didn't get very far, because her muscles simply didn't react to her brain's impulses yet. She was like a deer about to be trampled by a titan; her eyes big and scared, so Eren tried to placate her as best as he could.

"Dina," he said soothingly, "you don't have to be afraid. We're not here to hurt you. We're friends." Eren understood she probably thought they were from Marley. It was logical considering nobody really remembered their time as being a mindless titan.

He gave her some space as she controlled her irregular breathing pattern, all her hairs standing on end while she was trying to find her voice. "Where... where am I?" she spoke softly. Her voice was as feminine as they could get with a motherly undertone. It carried power but also the grace of something beautiful like a flower. It was a really intriguing blend of tones which made it very pleasant to listen to.

"You're in Paradis, just outside wall Maria," Eren answered. "We're all Eldians just like you. My name is Eren," he introduced, "and these are my friends Ymir and Annie."

Both females gave a little wave while Dina still tried to get used to all of her senses returning to her. Memories were still vague and left her utterly confused. "What happened to me?" she eventually asked, calming down a bit.

Eren hesitated for a bit, a sigh escaping his mouth before replying truthfully. "You were arrested by Marley for being part of the Eldia Restorationists. Your sentence was to wander Utopia forever as a mindless titan, much like your husband Grisha Yeager."

Like a shock-wave, all of her memories returned to her. She remembered how Zeke had turned them in and she also recalled her last moments; tied up and on her knees while the titan serum was injected into her. Her husband had looked at her with absolute terror in his eyes, but she had given him a kind smile in turn. "Wherever you are," she whispered to him lovingly, "I'll find you." Those were

the last words she had spoken until she was swallowed up into a never-ending nightmare, surrounded by nothing but darkness.

Dina was sweating as she saw those memories flash before her eyes, her heart beating in her throat. "Grisha!" she yelled, "where is he?" She looked around in a newfound panic only for Eren to sooth her.

"Don't worry, he's okay. I'll bring you to him, all right?" Eren promised Dina. He could see why his father would fall for such a gorgeous lady. She was filled with worry for him, and looked to be very kind and motherly.

Dina looked warily at Eren until she nodded her head. "Okay, thank you, Eren," she whispered reluctantly but appreciatively, taking his hand so she could stand up on her feet.

"But before we go," Eren added, "there are a few things I need to tell you."

It had been a long and rough day for Grisha Yeager. He was utterly exhausted. At the moment, he was lying on the couch because he was unable to walk yet. Carla had been worried sick when she saw the state her husband was in, but he reassured her he'd be fine and tried to wave her concern off, without much result.

She'd had enough of all the secrecy and demanded Grisha to finally tell what was going on. He grumbled and promised to tell as soon as Eren would return. What he didn't expect, however, was that he would have both Annie and Dina with him.

Needless to say, the shock was palpable on his face. Dina looked exactly as how he remembered her; she hadn't aged a day while he was considerably older now. "Dina," he whispered emotionally.

Dina's smile was filled with love, but also hurt. She wanted to kiss Grisha so badly, but knew that she couldn't. Eren had told her

everything on their way to his home, including he had been married again. "Hi, Grisha," she said and settled for a hug instead. "I missed you."

Annie stayed silent, especially when Carla and Mikasa joined in the living room as well. Grisha eventually motioned for everybody to sit down and then gave his son the stage.

Eren cleared his throat and saw that he had everybody's attention. Without holding back, he gave his small group of friends and loved ones his story and told them everything that they needed to know.

And that's all for now, people! Did you like it, love it, hate it? Review please! They make me smile like Dina in her titan form! :D Next chapter we'll have a little time skip and see Eren's group preparing for- and initiating their coup d'état. Until then.
^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Battle for Paradis: Preparations

Hey guys, I'm finally back! First off, let me apologize to all of you for going silent for 8 months. I tried my best to be consistent, but I failed, and since I'm graduating I had no time to write whatsoever. Now though, I am back, and hopefully, I can continue to upload a chapter a month. :) As always, enjoy! ^^

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

Roughly six months had passed since Eren had told his story to his family. A lot had changed in that time. Eren eventually had managed to convince both Reiner and Bertolt to join his side too, with some help from Annie, of course. While both boys were very reluctant at first, they quickly grew in their new roles.

Annie had been teaching Mikasa how to fight and defend herself, while Bertolt taught her how to handle rifles. She was a natural at both, which wasn't surprising whatsoever-she was an Ackerman, after all. Mikasa wanted to accompany Eren to the interior, and while both Grisha and Carla had flat out refused at first, there was no changing her mind.

And so, Annie and Bertolt were preparing her as best as they could. Meanwhile, Reiner was teaching Dina how to control her female titan while Eren still focused his efforts on teaching Ymir.

While a lot did change, one thing had stayed the same and even grew exponentially over these past months, and that was the close bond Eren had with his family. Needless to say, his story was shocking and hard to believe, but the amount of proof he had made it undeniable.

It resulted in an environment where everybody was looking out for each other. Carla had grown so fond of the three warriors of Marley and Ymir that she almost saw them as her own children, while Dina was like a sister she never had. As a result, the household was always busy with so many residents living there now.

Another thing that had grown was Mikasa's affections. She was the first to believe Eren's story and it had brought her that much closer to the boy who she liked so much. Eren had left out the detail they had married each other in the future, since he knew it would be inevitable that it was going to happen again. This time around, though, he was going to reciprocate her feelings a lot sooner.

At the moment, Eren, Grisha, Annie, Reiner, Bertolt, Ymir, Dina and Mikasa had all met in the basement to discuss their plan of attack tomorrow. They all knew the mission and how important it was.

"Everyone, this is the moment we have been training for," Eren began, eyeing each member of his group individually. "Our mission is to get the founding titan from Frieda Reiss, take down the faulty government and install a new one under the leadership of Historia Reiss. We'll split up in two when we've reached the interior around here," Eren explained, pointing to an entry point inside wall Sina.

"From there," he continued, "Grisha, Dina, Annie and Reiner will locate Historia and ensure her safety. She'll be on one of the estates the Reiss family owns and administers; either here, here or here," Eren explained, pointing at the locations on the map, which were all deep inside wall Rose.

"Once that's done," he continued, "they will provide the main defense against the Military Police Brigade once they'll inevitably find out a coup is happening. Dina will only shift when is necessary and focus her efforts on destroying their weaponry, though you don't have to be afraid for any opposition. The military is very corrupt and they are a bunch of lazy slacks who have never seen a titan before in their life."

The four of them nodded their heads, indicating that they understood.

"Meanwhile, Bertolt, Ymir, Mikasa and I will focus on Frieda and her founding titan. We'll try to reason with her first and only shift when Frieda is hostile and tries to kill us. I'll keep her occupied while Ymir gives the necessary protection to Bertolt and Mikasa.

"Once our mission is complete, we've one last step to achieve. In order for the military to be on our side when the coup is done, we have to expose the king and the higher ups as frauds. We'll use an influential newspaper to spread the truth of Paradis and crown Historia the new, legitimate ruler." Eren took a deep breath and then gave an encouraging smile. "Once this is over, we can start the slow process of getting Paradis titan free and prepare for the arrival of the cart and beast titan. Now, are there any questions?"

As he had expected, almost everybody had something on their mind. This was going to be an arduous and pretty dangerous task for everybody involved, hence why Eren wasn't surprised a lot of questions still remained.

"Reiner?" he offered gently.

"I'm wondering, Eren. You've got the attack, colossus and armored titan all sitting pretty in a couple of flasks. While we can't inherit the titans anymore, why not use them on Mikasa or Carla? Surely that would be more beneficial for us, right?"

Eren nodded his head. Reiner had a good point and Eren had thought about it a lot, but eventually decided it wasn't worth it. Mikasa was an exceptionally good fighter on her own and while his mom was a strong woman, she wasn't a fighter whatsoever.

"I believe with the current set-up we have it'll be more than enough to accomplish our goal. Moreover, more titans so deep in the heart of wall Rose and Sina would only cause unnecessary damage,

commotion and maybe even innocent lives. We want to avoid those as much as possible," Eren explained.

Reiner seemed satisfied with the answer. He nodded his head in contentment.

"Annie?" he continued gently.

"Maybe the most important detail of our mission." She motioned to Grisha, Dina and Reiner. "What does Historia look like?"

Eren grinned. Annie was always the one with attention to detail; calculated as ever. While Reiner's leadership was unmatched, Annie had to be one of the best strategists he ever met. Even at such a young age, she could probably match Dot or Erwin.

"I've thought about that. Since photo cameras are unheard of inside the walls, most people use composition drawings. Luckily, my father here had to master it for his profession as a doctor. He was kind enough to draw some with my help," Eren revealed and nodded to his father.

"I've drawn multiple head shots from the frontal and sagittal plane. Historia has blonde hair, blue eyes and is very short," Grisha explained while he grabbed a few drawings and showed them to everybody. "She'll furthermore act and speak sophisticated and may or may not react to the name Krista. Obviously, since she's only twelve, getting her good and trustworthy leads-men are necessities in the first years that she'll rule. Eren has provided us with two names, and I've also made drawings of them."

Grisha grabbed a few more pictures and showed them off. "The older gentleman is called Dot Pixis. He's a reliable general of the Garrison that will actively support our cause-assuming we can convince him-and is therefore essential to get on our side as quickly as possible. Most men in the army respect him, so that makes him a valuable asset to us." He paused for a moment to make sure everybody had gotten a good look at the general.

"The other gentleman is named Erwin Smith and he's commander of an elite unit of warriors who're extremely dangerous. You can guess why want him on our side as well," Grisha finished.

The group nodded their head. A successful coup didn't just mean crowning another ruler; it also meant having the army and the citizens on your side. Like with all massive changes, that needed careful planning and a lot of time.

"Mikasa?" Eren continued.

She gave him a small smile. "Are there any dangerous opponents we need to know of before we engage in battle?" she asked him curiously. "I don't doubt that the government has spies and assassins at the ready for people with loose lips that might cause an uproar."

Eren nodded his head, his widening smile matching Mikasa's. Just like Annie, she was a very smart girl at a young age. Two names appeared in his head, and not coincidentally, both had the last name Ackerman. "You're right, Mikasa. There are two guys to look out for, one even more lethal than the other. Again, my dad has been kind enough to draw them for us."

Just like before, Grisha grabbed a couple of sheets of paper and showed them to everybody while Eren explained. "The older looking fellow with the bowler hat is Kenny Ackerman," Eren saw Mikasa's eyes widen for a moment, but then they immediately turned neutral again as he continued, "and he's the guy who cleans up all the loose ends inside the walls. At the moment, he works as the crown's personal assassin, but later he becomes a commander for the Military Police Brigade."

A few murmurs were heard when Eren revealed this information, but everybody went silent again as he went on. "Kenny is notorious for slitting the throats of his victims. Furthermore, he's an excellent strategist, highly intelligent and a cunning individual. His accuracy

with his guns rival Bertolt's and Mikasa's, so don't ever engage him out in the open.

"However, his downfall is his quest for power. He'll do whatever it takes to get the 'power of the Gods' to himself, as he calls the ability to shift into a titan. Reasoning is out of the question with him. He's a bloody psychopath, so kill him if you can." Eren's voice was resolute, leaving no room for argument. Everybody understood the world was better off with some people off of it.

"The younger fellow," Eren continued, "is called Levi Ackerman." This time, Mikasa didn't move an inch as Eren revealed the matching last name. "This guy is extremely dangerous. We most likely won't see him since he leads the operations outside of wall Maria under Erwin's command, so he most likely won't be present, but on the off chance that he is, do not-under no circumstance-engage him." Eren's voice was stern and dead serious here. "If I'm being honest, I don't even know if I can take him on in my titan form, so flee when you see him."

Eren saw everybody tensing at what he revealed. They couldn't believe there was a guy who was even stronger than Eren with all of his knowledge and experience combined. "He's extremely fast, agile and level-headed," he continued, "you'll be down before you know it, and that's something I want to avoid, because once you're captured, you *will* be tortured and executed." Eren sighed. "But, he's not a bad guy. We'll need to have convinced Erwin before he gets the wrong idea and sends his elite squad after us."

"How are we going to do that? And what if the scenario does happen that he's coming after us?" Bertolt questioned, a bead of sweat rolling down his cheek. He doubted they would stand a chance if Levi truly was as terrifying as Eren made him out to be.

"That's something my father and I will work on. He's an excellent speaker and voice of reason-as you may know-and combined with my knowledge, we should be able to convince him sooner than later," Eren answered confidently. "And if the scenario happens that

the Levi squad will attack, I'll be the most suited to deal with them. They'll focus their attack on the main perpetrator anyway-which is me-so don't bother try to defend me then. They don't know Historia is important either, so flee with her while you can. Levi will surely stay behind and fight me, and maybe you'll have to deal with two or three extremely good fighters, but they're not invincible by any means..."

The pause that Eren made was noticeable, but nobody commented on it. Annie assumed he probably had experienced that they were defeated in some way or the other. She wondered who could bring down such experienced fighters, but didn't think too long on the subject. She instead focused on the final question being asked by Dina.

"I was wondering what kind of weaponry we're dealing with, Eren," she spoke. "You mentioned guns and canons. What kind of guns are they? Are there any other weapons we should know about?" Dina smiled at her stepson as he nodded.

"Paradis doesn't have any machine guns or long distance rifles," he explained. "We're talking about semi-automatic with a maximum effective distance of around two-hundred meters. Their cannons are old and inaccurate; those take a lot of time to reload as well. It'll give you plenty of opportunity to dismantle them." It seemed defeating the army wasn't going to be very hard. Still, Dina knew there was going to be a 'but' if she looked at Eren, and her assumptions were always very accurate.

"However," he continued, confirming Dina's suspicions, "they have a very unique and successful weapon that'll make them extremely agile and lethal in the air, and that's the vertical maneuvering equipment. It's basically a harness that will allow a soldier to fight in a 3D space as opposed to a 2D one. It works with grappling hooks that'll shoot the user into the air, powered by gas and armed with a set of extremely sharp plug-in blades. Designed to bring down titans first and foremost, they can be used very effectively in normal combat as well."

"Those sound like it'll be very hard to deal with," Ymir muttered.
"What's our plan of attack against them?"

Eren smiled. Since he had a lot of experience with them, he knew exactly what the weaknesses were as well. "Since they run on gas, there's only a limited time they can be used before they need to be refilled. It's the same with the blades, really. They break easily and need to be replaced. Stall long enough and they'll run out of resources eventually."

"I hope that's not the only way to defeat them," Reiner said. "You can't possibly expect us to exhaust their gas and blades." The others in the room nodded their head. If they were to rely on stalling alone, they might put each other in unnecessary danger.

Fortunately, Eren had thought about that too. Of course Reiner was the one who expressed his concerns regarding the stalling tactic; Eren expected nothing less. "Luckily, there's another way. The grappling hooks, while durable, are extremely prone to attacks. If you happen to find yourself facing the Military Police Brigade and they use the vertical maneuvering equipment, don't hesitate to shift." Eren paused his explanation and looked at both Dina and Ymir, whose stern expressions indicated that they understood.

Satisfied, he continued. "Just grab the hooks or kick them out of the wall; with the strength you possess they should break, rendering the equipment useless." Eren gave both females a reassuring glance. "But don't worry; since you'll be on the countryside, Dina, the equipment can't be used anyway. And you are with me, Ymir. As long as you cover me and protect the nape of your neck, nothing can happen."

Both women seemed to be relieved about that. "All right, Eren, I think with Grisha, Reiner and Annie at my side I'll be able to succeed," Dina replied. She eyed Grisha lovingly while Reiner and Annie gave a small smirk.

"I'll be able to succeed too!" Ymir chimed in. "You have prepared me well for this moment, Eren, I won't let you down!"

"Me neither, Eren," Mikasa stated just as passionately. "I'll make sure to give you cover as long as necessary!"

Everybody agreed and gave similar cries of encouragement. Eren closed his eyes, unable to hold in a chuckle that escaped from his mouth. The coup d'état they'd planned was going to be a major operation; there were a lot of things that could go wrong, Eren knew. Even so, he had an elite team of fighters at his side who believed in him through and through. Somewhere, in the back of his mind, he found the notion ridiculous, but here he was; all the people in this room were willing to risk their lives for Paradis and Eldia under his command. If they believed in him, then so would he; failing was not an option.

"Now then, if there are no other questions, I suggest we get our sleep," Grisha advised sagely while looking at his son. He couldn't have been prouder when he saw the resolute look in his eyes. "We need our rest if we leave for the interior early in the morning."

Somewhere on the vast estate of the Reiss family, under a thick oak tree, a girl with golden blonde locks was looking up idly at the sky. The tree provided excellent shade against the morning heat while the wind played with its branches, making the leaves rustle.

The clouds were non-existent today. Usually, Historia would see if she could make any shapes out of them to ease her boredom. Even the kids who usually would be throwing rocks at her were not present today. At least that gave her some sort of distraction. She honestly preferred that over being ignored all day.

In the distance, Historia could hear her maternal grandparents going about their usual chores in and around the estate. Her mother wasn't present, of course. Historia had no idea what she did all day long, but the excuses her maternal grandparents fetched her became

more obvious the more she asked. Eventually, she decided to let it rest, simply because she knew she was being lied to anyway. Not that it mattered to Historia; her mother hadn't said a single word to her ever in her entire life.

Honestly, the only reason she was here, playing with her hair and staring at the endless sky, was because she expected big sister to come around, like she would do very often. Historia couldn't remember much about her; she only knew she was her big sister and that she would feel extremely happy and content whenever she was around, but the memories of her get foggy afterwards.

It frustrated Historia to no end, but she trusted on her feelings and intuition that her big sister would show up today, and this time, she was not going to forget the experience. She was going to write it down right after she would leave again. After all, big sister had been the one to teach her how to write and read.

Just when she was starting to get a bit sleepy, a woman she didn't recognize appeared in her point of view. She was pretty with the same beautiful blonde hair that she had. Normally if the estate got visitors, they would completely ignore her, yet this woman gave her a sweet, motherly smile. "Hi there. You must be Historia Reiss, am I right?"

The way how Historia's eyes lit up was almost comical. "You know my name?" she squeaked, her voice cracking with surprise. This was the first time in her life anybody outside the estate had given her attention, excluding her big sister, of course.

"Of course I do, sweetie," the woman cooed, bending through her knees to get on eye level with her. "After all, I came all the way from Shiganshina to see you."

If it was possible, Historia's eyes would've rolled out of her skull right then and there. Somebody she didn't know came to see *her*? She'd never heard of Shiganshina before, but it sounded like it was far away. "Who are you?" she asked, cocking her head. Conflicting

emotions ran through Historia's body: on one hand she was extremely confused, but on the other she felt incredible excitement well up that this woman came specially for her. For what reason, she could only guess.

"My name is Dina," the woman introduced herself warmly, holding out her hand, "it's very nice to meet you, Historia."

Historia shook Dina's hand dumbly, unable to comprehend what was happening yet. "Are you a friend of big sister?" she guessed, having no reason to believe otherwise.

Dina laughed and shook her head. "I am not, though I am somewhat familiar with your big sister," she revealed with a wink. Dina stood up and stretched her body lazily. "It's so hot today, wouldn't you agree? How about we go for a little stroll?"

"You mean off the estate?" Historia whispered, her excitement only building. Leaving the estate was one of her biggest dreams, even if it was just to explore the countryside a bit.

"Exactly, sweetie!" Dina replied jovially. "Don't worry, I'm a friend of your father, Rod Reiss. He told me to come visit you and show you around the area a bit. He knows you've been dying to see something other than this boring estate. So, what do you say? You wanna come along with me?"

The offer was too tempting to refuse for Historia. Having learnt ample social skills up until this point, she completely trusted Dina to bring her back once the stroll was over. "Would I?" she squeaked with excitement, a genuine smile spreading on her face while her blue eyes twinkled with life. Historia was so eager that she felt like jumping up and down; and that's exactly what she did.

Dina giggled at her adorable antics and offered her a hand. "Let's go then!" she chirped.

Not thinking twice, Historia took Dina's hand as they moved away from the oak tree she'd sat under for hours on end, to one of the many exits on the estate in a leisurely tempo. So many times, Historia had dreamed of leaving the estate, and it seemed her dad—even though she had never met him in person—had finally let his voice be heard and sent Dina to show her around.

She was so happy that she almost failed to hear the gunshot that went off behind her and the scream of anguish coming from Dina herself. Of course, that was a little hard to ignore when warm blood splattered in her face. Historia's eyes widened in shock, her heart skipped a beat as she felt Dina's hand go limp in hers. She looked at Dina with horror and the gaping wound in her upper arm; part of it was completely blown off.

"My, my, what do we have here? Where are the pretty ladies off to?" a deep, rumbling voice asked. Historia was petrified on the spot; her hands were shaking as Dina's blood dripped from her face to the ground below. Behind her she could see a man sneering at them. He wore shady black clothing and was accompanied by four other men. The smoking barrel in his hand indicated he was the perpetrator of firing the shot. Furthermore, what stood out about him was what Historia recognized as a cowboy hat that rested neatly on top of his head.

The man continued to grin savagely while Dina cried in pain. "Here I was doing my usual rounds on the estates of the Reiss family, expecting another boring day, when my little eye spotted a woman I didn't recognize talking to Historia and trying to take her away. What do you say, boys? Shall I teach Historia a lesson why she should *never* leave this estate by slitting this woman's throat right in front of her?"

"Oh, I think that's a very good idea!" one of them agreed, chuckling like mad.

"All right then, let's get the fun started!"

Deep inside the heart of wall Sina, Frieda Reiss was calmly drinking a cup of tea. She was dressed up neatly, her white dress and matching straw hat giving her the allure of a proper lady. Long black hair flowed to her waist and she spoke with eloquence and poise fit for a queen.

Her father, Rod Reiss, was sitting opposite of her. Usually very calm and level-headed, today, he seemed very nervous about something. "Are you sure about this, Frieda?" he whispered in disbelief, holding his handkerchief to wipe the sweat from his face. "What if this is the wrong decision?"

"It is not, father," she spoke with finality that made it seem it was an everyday fact. "We're in for war sooner or later. The first king made it clear he wanted to save Eldia by shutting it off completely from the rest of the world. The threat of trampling the earth with all the wall titans should any nation be foolish enough to attack us has kept us protected for one hundred years, but it won't work forever."

Rod didn't understand. Frieda's personality had completely shifted about six months ago. He wondered if it had to do something with inheriting the first king's thoughts and opinions, but why they were so different now from a half year ago, he still couldn't fathom.

"So, what do you propose we do then? Sit back and wait? We've done that for six months!" Rod cried out in disbelief.

Frieda was unfazed by her father's sudden outburst and continued to sip her tea gently. "Yes, father. And we continue to wait until I say otherwise. Something is set into motion. I don't know what, but we're going to experience it sooner than later." Frieda was clear that she wasn't going anywhere. For six months, she hadn't been out of the estate, and that worried Rod more than anything. It meant she was waiting for something to happen or somebody to show up, but what or whom that was she had no idea about, and that frustrated Rod more than anything. He didn't like uncertainty whatsoever.

She even skipped her monthly visit to Historia today; something that was unheard of. That confirmed to Rod that this wasn't Frieda's own doing but more so the will of the first king.

Rod muttered something under his breath when he failed to convince Frieda otherwise yet again. He'd tried for the past four months or so and he honestly didn't know why he still put effort into it. Nonetheless, he respected Frieda's decision and would always fall silent afterwards.

"Very well then," Rod said, nodding his head in agreement to his daughter. He poured himself some tea as well and continued to accompany Frieda in complete silence. He took this time to recollect his thoughts and to think about the future. He knew it was an uncertain one, but he believed the path they'd chosen was ultimately the best. This way, the remaining Eldians stayed safe and oblivious to the dangers of the outside world.

When Rod had finished his tea, commotion was heard inside the estate. He grumbled and opened the doors to the living room to see what all the fuss was about. In the middle of the room stood four kids; they couldn't have been older than twelve, yet when Rod saw them panic gripped him right around the throat. They were surrounded by men of the Military Police Brigade-his personal body guards-who looked absolutely pissed. He saw how one of them was tending himself to minor wounds the kids inflicted upon him; he likely got punched square in the face when they were denied entry to the estate and forced themselves in.

"Sir," one of his bodyguards stated professionally, "these four rebellious kids attacked Maxwell and then stormed inside the living room like they were playing a game of tag. What are your orders, sir? Should we dispose of them?"

Rod wanted to scream yes at the top of his lungs, but before he could do so, Frieda appeared at his side. She put her hand on his shoulder reassuringly, before giving the Military Police Brigade a warm smile. "That won't be necessary, gentlemen. These four

individuals are our prized guests." She paused and eyed Eren with confidence. "After all, they are the reason why I have been waiting all this time."

That's it for now, people. Did you like it, love it, hate it? Please leave a review! I love to read and to respond to them. ;3 Next time the continuation. Until then! ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Battle for Paradis: Mayhem

New chapter is here, people! As always, enjoy! :D

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

As an experienced fighter, Eren was a natural tactician as well. Locating Frieda Reiss was never the problem in his mind, but convincing her to join his cause-without escalating the situation until it would turn into a bloody titan fight in the heart of wall Sina like his battle with Annie had been-was going to be very tricky indeed.

Therefore, he had prepared with his dad in fine detail how he should approach Frieda and what he should say in about fifty different scenarios. What he never expected, however, was for Frieda to welcome them with open arms.

Mikasa, Ymir and Bertolt all eyed Eren with uncertainty at Frieda's polite tone when she ordered the Military Police Brigade to back off. They did so, albeit reluctantly and with frowns on their faces.

"Please forgive my bodyguards for their rudeness and allow me to formerly welcome you into the Reiss estate, ladies and gentlemen," Frieda continued in that same polite tone, bowing slightly. "As you probably know, my name is Frieda Reiss and this is my father, Rod Reiss."

Eren was slightly stupefied. *"Why is she so welcoming? Is it a trap to lure us in a safe sense of security?"* Eren shook his head mentally. *"No, it can't be. She doesn't know about us or what we want. However, she did say she had been waiting for us..."* Deciding that

the best way to approach the situation was to reciprocate, Eren bowed his head as well.

"It's nice to meet you, Frieda Reiss. My name is Eren Yeager and these are my friends Mikasa Ackerman, Ymir and Bertolt Hoover. We've come all the way from Shiganshina with important information that might reshape Paradis as we know it and restore Eldia to its former glory."

Rod guffawed at what Eren said, completely caught off guard by the fact he was so knowledgeable about certain things that should be classified to the general public. The Military Police Brigade just snorted, thinking what Eren said was complete nonsense. The only one who seemed happy was Frieda. Her smile was bright as she beckoned them over. "That is very great news, sir Yeager. Come, let's discuss this in more detail privately."

"Hold on," Mikasa suddenly said, her eyes sharp and her voice stern. "Why should we trust you? For all we know you're deceiving us." She raised a good point. Ymir and Bertolt nodded their heads in agreement as well. For all that they'd heard about Frieda, she was acting completely different.

"You do not need to worry, miss Ackerman," Frieda reassured, "for I have been told six months ago about your arrival. I have waited ever since for you to pay me a visit." Frieda eyed Eren again, her eyes shining brightly. "You are feeling it too, don't you? It's why you were so confident that I was in this exact estate while I could've been anywhere else. Whatever you have to say, I will most likely listen and whatever request you have, I will most likely comply. There are forces at work here that we can't comprehend, but I trust them to guide us in the right direction."

Eren understood what she was talking about. The curse of Ymir and the first king's will; forces beyond logical explanation. They were always present, but how they worked was simply unfathomable. "All right, Frieda. We will talk about this information privately." Eren gave

Mikasa, Ymir and Bertolt a nod. Since they trusted Eren, they followed him without complaint.

Once they were alone-in the same room where Frieda and Rod had been drinking tea in previously-Frieda cut to the chase immediately. "Eren Yeager, you want my founding titan, don't you?"

This time, Eren was prepared. He didn't react, although Mikasa, Ymir and Bertolt did gasp. Of course, they hadn't expected for her to know that, hence their surprise. "I do, Frieda," he replied evenly nonetheless, his calm demeanour radiating strength. "I need it if I want to reform Paradis."

Rod Reiss eyed Eren crazily. This kid out of nowhere just waltzed in his home and demanded Frieda to hand over her founding titan so he could reform Paradis. He couldn't believe what he was witnessing. "Are you insane?" he questioned, clasping one hand over his face. "Do you think Frieda is going to hand over her titan to some random kid? How do you even know about the power of the titans!?"

"He knows because he has the founding titan as well," Frieda replied with a small smile. Rod's reaction would've been hilarious if the situation wasn't so serious; he was gaping like a fish, his expression completely shocked while his face turned white as snow. Ignoring her father's stunned look, Frieda nodded her head to Eren. "Very well. I will give you my founding titan so you can reform Paradis."

This time, Eren couldn't help but keep the shock off of his face himself. "You... Just like that?" he stuttered in disbelief. "You haven't even heard what my plan is!"

Frieda gave another sweet smile. "I don't have to. Whatever you are going to tell me, my decision is already made; it was set in stone six months ago. I don't know what you did, Eren Yeager, but you had my support the moment you started your reformation."

Rod's cynical chuckle reverberated through the entire room. "You..." he whispered, pointing to Eren. "What have you done to my daughter? Did you brainwash her, you devil!? Do you think I will let you devour her so you can get her founding titan? I should kill you right here-"

However, Rod's angry rant was cut off forcefully by Frieda, who slapped him across the cheek with enough force to make it sting. "Father, if you try to hurt Eren in any way, I will personally kill you." Her words were so icy and dead serious that Rod was rooted to the spot. "If Eren wants to devour me, he can. If he wants anybody else to devour me, he can as well."

Mikasa, Ymir and Bertolt now began to understand Frieda was not acting on her own intuitions, but rather those forced upon her when she received the founding titan. This realization dawned on Rod too. He hissed, but stayed completely silent.

"Eren Yeager, I will comply with anything you want me to do," Frieda continued. "Tell me, and I'll obey."

Never once had Eren even dreamed of hoping that convincing Frieda would be this easy. Yet here she was, completely willing to throw her life away if Eren so wished. It seemed he didn't only avoid potential disaster, but gained a powerful ally as well. "Okay, Frieda," Eren responded after he had cleared his thoughts, radiating positivity. "This is what I want you to do..."

After Eren had explained his plan to Frieda and Rod-and told them he wasn't going to kill Frieda but simply remove her titan-he asked them to pull strings at the higher ups so they could actually start to expose the king as a fraud to the masses. Of course, this was going to result into opposition from the Military Police Brigade, So Eren was preparing his squad as best as he could.

"In about a few hours, hell will break loose around here," he spoke to them seriously. "Once the Military Police Brigade gets word about

the coup d'état, I want you guys to stick to the plan no matter what." He paused to give his team the individual attention that they deserved before continuing. "Now to make sure, tell me one final time what your roles are."

Mikasa went first. "I provide far away cover alongside Bertolt with my rifle. If we get under heavy fire, we will send out a distress signal so Eren can shift and help us out." Then, somewhat hesitantly, she added, "I will not engage the enemy one on one."

Eren smiled at the sour look she sported. Gently cupping her chin, he gave her a kiss on her nose. "Your time will come, Mikasa. Trust me, all right?" Eren spoke kindly. The blush that appeared on her cheeks was nothing more than adorable.

"I-I will, Eren, I mean I always have!" Mikasa squeaked in embarrassment, which resulted into snickers from Bertolt and Ymir. Eren would've chuckled too if it wasn't for the fact he was simply too engaged in the mission at the moment.

"Good. Don't let me down then, all right?" He gave her a wink before continuing.

"Bertolt?" Eren asked.

"I will provide far away cover as well. In the circumstance that we have to deal with one on one battles, I'll use my excessive combat training to stall long enough so you can help us out," Bertolt answered without hesitation.

"Perfect. What about you, Ymir?" Eren said finally.

"I will be your back-up in my titan form. I'll use your body as a shield and make sure we don't get lured into any traps or get attacked from behind," she spoke resolutely.

"Excellent! It seems we're all set then," Eren stated. "All right, team, let's take in our positions." While Eren was preparing for the

inevitable battle, he wondered how his dad, his stepmom, Annie and Reiner were doing.

Kenny Ackerman had seen a lot of things in his considerable lifespan already: from titans devouring people to straight up corruption and murder. Growing up with these types of things made it an everyday part of his life, and therefore, killing was in his blood. So, the moment he spotted a pretty young blonde talking to Historia, he initially thought nothing of it, until his instincts told him something was off about the encounter. Patiently waiting, he stayed expertly hidden until the woman started to lead Historia away.

Kenny's grin couldn't have been wider at that point; his instincts never failed him. He beckoned some of his men over silently before pulling his gun. They were a good thirty-five yards away, but Kenny's aim was impeccable. He pulled the trigger and shot the woman straight in her upper arm, who gave a loud shriek of anguish.

A pity he had to kill the woman now. She was certainly pretty looking. He figured now was the best time to reveal himself. "My, my, what do we have here? Where are the pretty ladies off to?" he asked savagely, his grin crooked on his face. He saw how the woman's arm dangled lifelessly against her body, blood rushing out of her gaping wound while the initial blast had splattered it against Historia's face, who looked completely terrified.

The woman continued to cry in pain; if that wound didn't get treated fast, she'd die of blood loss anyway, so Kenny was going to use her as an example for Historia. "Here I was doing my usual rounds on the estates of the Reiss family, expecting another boring day, when my little eye spotted a woman I didn't recognize talking to Historia and trying to take her away. What do you say, boys? Shall I teach Historia a lesson why she should *never* leave this estate by slitting this woman's throat right in front of her?" he asked his men, already grabbing his trusty blade for the final kill.

"Oh, I think that's a very good idea!" one of them agreed, chuckling like mad.

It was decided then. Kenny was going to enjoy this. "All right then, let's get the fun started!" he exclaimed. His grin never left his face as he walked over to the woman with the full intention to mercilessly bring her to her end. However, that's where his grin left his face as the woman spoke up.

"Kenny Ackerman," she muttered, regaining her exposure incredibly fast, which shocked Kenny more than that she knew his name. "Do you really think that I came unprepared?" The woman's voice was calm yet full of murderous intent. She clutched her arm but ignored it completely, as if she wasn't lethally wounded in the first place. "If you don't want things to escalate further, I'd suggest that you let me go with Historia right now."

In any other circumstance, Kenny would've laughed, but the snarl on the woman's face told him she wasn't bluffing whatsoever. Moreover, the wound he had inflicted was buzzing with a red static, and in turn, it was healing in front of his very eyes. His men were all rooted to the spot at what they saw. "A witch!" one of them blurted out in horror.

Kenny wasn't easily spooked, but this did scare him a little. He'd seen this once before-the power of the Gods when he'd met Uri Reiss-but didn't want to believe the woman possessed the ability to transform into a titan as well. "Can I at least know the pretty lady's name before I make a decision?" he inquired, doing his best to stall so he could think up a plan. Giving the woman's incredible healing factor, he knew he was dealing with something very serious.

"You cannot," she replied flatly. She spat out the blood that had accumulated in her mouth before continuing, "and frankly, my patience is running thin. I'll go with Historia now. Don't try to stop me."

Her arm had healed enough that she could use it again. Grabbing Historia's hand, she slowly started to back off, never keeping her

eyes off of Kenny. He would've let her go with Historia for now so he could assess what he was dealing with, but one of his men raised his rifle in defiance, fully intent to shoot the woman in her head.

In the next moment, multiple gunshots were heard from the distance. Bullets zipped past Kenny's head so close he could feel the air pressure they created. He was fortunate enough not to get hit, but two of his men were not that fortunate. The one who had raised his rifle got hit in the neck; the bullet slashed right through his jugular. He gurgled helplessly as blood spew out of his neck like a fountain before dropping to the ground lifelessly.

The other man cried out in pain as the bullet went through his shoulder, destroying his acromion-clavicular joint. He clasped it tightly as he grunted, whimpered and wallowed, desperately trying to put pressure on the wound; his arm was completely useless at the moment.

Kenny hissed, his heart beating a mile a minute. "Sharpshooters! Take cover!" he cried to his remaining men, quickly dashing to the oak tree Historia had been sitting under. While he was running, he aimed his gun at the blond woman once more, this time with the intent to blow her head off of her torso.

However, the distraction her back-up had created was enough for the woman to do something he'd never forget. She bit down on her skin and immediately afterwards yellow lightning struck the ground where she stood, making the earth shudder. A titan began to build itself up out of nothing, towering over the estate once the transformation was completed. The smile she wore was creepy enough to spook Kenny completely, especially when she looked down upon him, her murderous intentions clear as day.

" I think I might need some back-up myself for this one," he thought with wide eyes, grabbing his other gun and firing crazily at the smiling titan in front of him.

Dina grumbled inside her titan disappointingly; she hadn't expected to deal with Kenny Ackerman of all people. *"And I was so close to getting Historia as well,"* she thought sourly. That gunshot wound he had inflicted on her had hurt so bad that she was surprised she didn't pass out. What surprised her more, however, was the fact how fast it healed now that she was a titan-shifter. Luckily, Annie, Reiner and Grisha had given her excellent back-up from the spot they were hidden in. Although they missed Kenny, they'd given her enough time to shift. She would simply finish off Kenny herself now.

"I missed him," Annie said stoically to Reiner and Grisha, her disappointment palpable in her words. She never kept her eyes off Kenny, but since Dina had shifted, she didn't have a clear shot on him anymore.

"We all missed him," Grisha grumbled, reloading his rifle and aiming for Kenny's remaining men who had scattered. *"This mean all hell will break loose in a moment. Dina shifting will cause a lot of commotion."*

"We'll have to move soon," Reiner stated. "If they get air of our location, we'll be trapped before we know it. Never mind that Historia is out and in the open. Grisha, how long do we have before back-up arrives for Kenny?" He shot his rifle once more, missing by an inch as the bullet ricocheted off of some metalwork from a well one of Kenny's men had hidden behind.

"Ten minutes at most. Dina will be spotted from miles away around here. Every soldier of the Military Police Brigade will be sent to kill her if we don't secure Historia quickly," he responded. His rifle went off to finish the guy who he had shot in his shoulder previously. This time, he hit him in the back as he tried to run for cover.

"I'll go," Annie said immediately, packing up her rifle. Not waiting for an answer, she started to sprint out in the open to get to Historia's location.

"Hey, Annie!" Reiner screamed after her, his face turned into anger and concern for her. "I'll go after her!" He didn't wait for Grisha's opinion on the matter as he tried to catch up to Annie.

Grisha cursed under his breath, obviously not agreeing with this turn of events, but he wasn't going to run after them. *"I'll never be able to run that fast. Best I can do is to cover them,"* he reasoned, steadying himself so he could shoot his rifle once more.

Meanwhile, Kenny had fired both of his guns empty on the smiling titan, yet she wasn't fazed whatsoever. Instead, she brought one of her arms backwards and up-high, trying to squash Kenny like a pesky bug. "What the..." he hissed before jumping and rolling out of the way just in time. Dina's hand smacked the ground so hard it left a big imprint behind while dust was kicked up everywhere.

"That was way too close," Kenny thought wildly, his heart beating in his throat. He had to reload fast and then somehow hit her in the nape; it was the only way he was going to stand a chance. He cursed himself for not bringing his vertical maneuvering equipment with him. Much time to think and to recover he didn't get. Dina continued her assault by sweeping her hand sideways like she was delivering a slap, only this one would turn him into a bloody pulp if it hit.

Miraculously, he was able to dodge out of the way by doing a back-flip on his hands, but the wind Dina generated with her sweeping motion still knocked him roughly off his feet. He grunted as he landed on his back, the burning sensation of the sand he slid over bruising him. Kenny scrambled to his feet like he was possessed. *"I can't fight her head-on,"* he realized. *"I need to distract her."*

Looking around, he spotted the sole occupant watching the battle unfold shell-shocked. Historia hadn't moved a single inch since the battle had started. She was completely rooted to the spot. Grinning, Kenny did the only thing he could in this situation. "Johan! Shoot Historia! Kill her!" he ordered to one of his men who had taken cover in a barn.

Immediately, the smiling titan shifted her attention to Historia, which is exactly what Kenny wanted. He had time to reload his guns while his subordinate aimed his rifle on the blonde girl with the intention to take her life.

Before he could shoot, Dina had already blocked the path between him and Historia, especially when she saw Annie and Reiner approaching in the distance. *"Good, get Historia in safety, I'll handle things here."* She was tired of playing games; Dina didn't want to resort to this, but she knew she couldn't underestimate her opponents.

She spread both of her hands like they were claws; her fingers hardening to steel like proportions. With incredible speed, she approached the gunman who tried to shoot Historia, the earth rumbling under her feet. The agonizing shriek of absolute terror was cut short when Dina slashed her claws downwards in an X pattern, slicing him up in multiple bloodied humps of flesh. The barn never withstood the attack either; long gashes ran along its entire frame, creaking ominously before the building collapsed down on itself in a pile of rubble and dust.

Annie couldn't help but smirk a bit when she saw the spectacle unfold. *"The power of the female titan at full display; Eren chose wisely to give it to Dina,"* she thought with pride in her voice. She was the first to reach Historia. Not thinking twice, she scooped up the petrified girl to bring her to safety. However, a bullet blocked her path before she could run back.

"Not so fast, missy," Kenny hissed dangerously. He'd seen what the smiling titan was capable of, but he also knew she'd be preoccupied with the reinforcements that already were arriving on the scene: men of the Military Police Brigade, fully equipped with weapons, heavy artillery and vertical maneuvering equipment. "Historia isn't going anywhere."

"Drop your weapons, Kenny!" Reiner screamed, having caught up and aiming his rifle at the mercenary. "Or else I'll shoot."

Kenny aimed his second gun at Reiner with a crooked smile. "You don't know what I am capable of, boy. I could kill you both if I want, but that won't give me any answers, now would it? Now why don't we solve this in a civilized manner? I'll drop my weapons if you drop yours." Kenny's smile couldn't be wider as Reiner seemed to contemplate the option, his body language unsure.

Annie's gaze, however, turned sharp. "You're lying, Kenny," she responded cunningly. "You know that you're in the disadvantage; you're hoping to take us off guard with your hidden knives."

Kenny just chuckled, not saying anything for the longest of time. The tense situation lasted for a few more seconds until a big cannon blast was heard coming their way. Both parties gasped at the incoming projectile; the explosion went off just a few yards from them, knocking them off their feet violently.

Dina widened her eyes at the carnage; that shot was entirely meant for her, but the guy's aim was absolutely terrible. "*I have to help them,*" her mind screamed at her. Ignoring the small army of men shooting at her, she covered the distance in mere seconds, desperately looking through the smoke and dust for her allies. There she found Historia, knocked out cold. Blood ran from her face while her body was completely covered in soot and dirt. "*Oh no, you poor thing,*" Dina thought sadly, protectively wrapping her up in her hands. While she had secured Historia, she looked for Annie, Reiner and Kenny, but couldn't find them whatsoever. "*C'mon, where are they?*" she thought, her desperation growing. Another cannon blast knocked her back to reality. The projectile managed to hit her this time around; she was blasted straight in her back, knocking her off balance and damaging her more than she would like to admit. Dina growled and roared, her titan producing so much noise that everybody in the immediate area had to cover their ears less they were reduced to a bloody pulp.

Dina knew she had to make a decision now. Staying longer with Historia in her hands brought her in grave danger, never mind the fact that she had no idea in what condition she was in at the

moment. Her frustration and grief grew stronger as tears rolled down her cheeks. *"Annie, Reiner. I'm sorry I couldn't protect you."*

With no idea how they were doing, Dina took a run for it, effectively making the army follow her: she had to bring Historia to Grisha immediately and then focus all her efforts on defeating the Military Police Brigade if they wanted any chance in their mission succeeding.

The higher-ups and their puppet king had no idea what was going to hit them when they awoke today. Early in the morning, they were all enjoying breakfast together, chatting amiably about how much money they had earned, or what concubine they'd added to their ever-growing collection of women they'd slept with. They were in a jolly good mood; nothing could ruin it at the moment.

That was until presumably a *titan* was spotted on the countryside near one of the estates of the Reiss family. Most of them had scoffed and laughed, waving it off as mere lies to scare the commoners, but when the rumors were confirmed to be real, some of them did start to sweat a little.

They'd discussed heatedly how it was possible a titan was running loose so deep into the heart of wall Rose and how to combat it, that their hearts almost threatened to stop when the most influential newspaper-Berg Newspaper from Stohess District-had printed an article about them claiming that they were frauds. From there, a bloody revolution seemed to appear out of nowhere where most of the Garrison started to combat the Military Police Brigade while hordes of people let their voices be heard all within the walls.

They expected the worst when Dot Pixis and Dhalis Zachary didn't respond to their distress messages, nor could they contact Frieda or Rod Reiss. The only one who was defending them at the moment was Nile Dok, but they had no idea how long he would hold out. Driven in a corner, they requested the audience of their only hope left. They didn't like it one bit, but it was their only chance.

"Tell us, you are still loyal to the crown, aren't you?" one of them asked, his desperate quaver in his voice noticeable.

"I am, milord."

"Then rid us from this uproar and we shall reward you and your men handsomely!" he responded a little bit too loudly.

"We don't seek compensation. However, we fully expect that our expeditions outside the walls will be funded fully from now on," the man in question responded calmly.

"Yes, whatever you want! You have our word!" the higher-up agreed immediately.

"For what it is worth; probably less than the dirt on the streets. You are lucky we weren't on an expedition and that we could come so quickly," he thought, but didn't say this aloud. Instead, he stood at attention and bowed. "I shall see how we can address this situation with the least number of casualties possible. The Survey Corps Special Operation Squad is at your service," commander Erwin Smith stated respectfully.

Behind him, Eld Jinn, Oluo Bozado, Petra Ral and Gunther Schultz all bowed their heads, even though they were all thinking the same thing; the sheer ridiculousness of what they had to do was mind-boggling. There was no way they were going to kill people of their own kind, yet they didn't speak up out of place. They trusted Erwin would come up with a solution.

The only one who didn't bow was the short man in the back, who looked bored out of his mind. "Right," Levi Ackerman stated, "let's handle this quickly. There are bigger problems running around outside of the walls."

Never would he have imagined that the strongest titan he was ever going to face was the initiator of this coup d'état and that he would meet him deep inside wall Sina.

That's it for now people! The battle for Paradis has officially started! Did you like it, love it, hate it? Please leave a review! I love them! :3 Until next time! ^^

~Syrup

Battle for Paradis: Desperation

Back again, once again, people! Enjoy the next chapter! :D

~Lazer149: (...) nice work making this fanfic (...) This is the best AOT fanfic I've read in a while!

Thank you! :)

~Guest: (...) I loved all the tension in this chapter (...) I'm so excited to see your next installment! Keep up the good work!

Your kind words are immensely appreciated! Thank a ton! :D

laviidarle-toast: I know you are busy and all, but please don't take that long to update. (...)

I'll definitely try my best!

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

Dina was cursing to herself violently. Not only did she leave Reiner and Annie to their fates, she also had no idea if Historia was going to make it or not. She had left the unconscious girl at Grisha's side, who looked fearfully at the condition she was in. Needless to say, he was checking all of her vitals immediately.

More time to assess the situation wasn't given to Dina; the Military Police Brigade was doing everything in their power to bring her down, even though they were as scared as trapped mice. She had mild respect for them, but not to the point that she was afraid to kill if

really necessary. She had lured them into an open field where they couldn't use their vertical maneuvering equipment.

"Don't be afraid, men! Shoot that monstrosity down!" the commander in charge yelled, his own anxiety palpable in his voice. Big beads of sweat were rolling down his face and his eyes had dilated into pinpricks.

"I need to focus on their cannons like Eren told me," Dina thought to herself, trying to keep her head in the game. She counted at least twenty of them and about one-hundred soldiers in total. Big blasts were heard as the cannons let loose their fire power, the incoming projectiles inaccurate but severely damaging if they hit her.

Most of them passed her harmlessly, exploding behind her and kicking up smoke and dirt. She did see one or two coming straight at her, and out of a reflex, hardened her fingers into sharp claws and slashed at them, reducing them to debris blown away by the wind. *"Now is my chance,"* she thought with a low growl.

As expected, the cannons needed a lot of time to recharge. It was a time-consuming process that left the Military Police Brigade sweating. Smirking inwardly, Dina went into a sprint, her footsteps drumming on the ground intimidatingly as she approached the terrified soldiers. It was like a small earthquake every time she moved, and going as fast as she did meant she would cover the distance in just a few seconds.

"Fire, fire those damn cannons!" the commander cried out, shaking in his boots. "What is taking so long? Don't you see she's going to trample us!?"

"We haven't loaded the cannons yet!"

"She's coming! Do something!"

"Shoot with your rifles!"

Total panic broke out among the Military Police Brigade. Simple bullets didn't harm Dina whatsoever; they inflicted small wounds that she'd heal almost instantly. When she'd reached the small army, most of them were already fleeing. Dina wasn't interested in hurting them anyway; she simply grabbed four cannons and smashed them together with so much force that they were partly reduced to dust. The sound of metal grinding on metal sent a big boom throughout the area, the sound harder than any cannon could produce.

" *That's four down, only sixteen to go,*" Dina thought with satisfaction. If she kept this up, she would sweep the Military Police Brigade easily. However, it seemed some brave men and women had stayed behind despite her threatening advances. They'd aimed some of the remaining cannons at her from point blank range.

Dina hissed when one of the cannon's projectiles was fired directly at her face. She tried to block it with her hardened claws, but since she didn't put any force behind the block-but rather used her claws as a shield-some of her fingers cracked as a result while the top of her pink was blown off completely.

At the same time, another blast hit her ankle joint. A sickening crack was heard as her talus and its connective tissues gave away under the force, breaking it and making her fall down to one knee. Dina's eyes widened significantly at the precarious situation she found herself so suddenly in. Her mobility was severely limited and that gave the Military Police Brigade all the time to fire more cannons at her. Moreover, it seemed they figured out she could only harden her fingers into sharp claws, while the rest of her body stayed unprotected.

This seemed to give them some of their courage back. The commander's nervous tone was replaced with one of determination, albeit shaky and uneven in pitch. "Great job! She's not invincible by any means! Attack now that she's vulnerable. Those of you who have rifles, aim for her eyes, make her blind!"

Dina realized all too quickly what the commander was hoping for. *"They're going to make me choose what part of my body to defend; there's no way I can block all of their attacks,"* she thought, panic gripping her from every side. Growling loudly, she let loose another ear-splitting shriek, the decibels she produced enough to shatter the nearby windows of the estate. With one hand covering her eyes from the incoming bullets, she sliced her other claw in an arch all around her, hoping to be intimidating and take out as many cannons as possible. She succeeded into hitting four more, the heavy artillery getting swept away like cheap toys, throwing up dirt and big chunks of rocks in their trajectory. Anyone unfortunate enough to be hit by them would be reduced to paste.

However, some brave men and women still managed to fire off a few of the cannons at point blank range; there was no way they were going to miss her. The impact of the explosions made Dina stumble; since she didn't bother protecting her legs, most of the damage was centered around her knees and ankles. A sickening crack was heard as her left foot was severed completely, her right knee cap was as good as demolished and most of her muscle function was lost, boiling hot blood sizzling in the afternoon sun from the multiple wounds she had sustained.

Dina knew she was a sitting duck at this point. Her mobility was completely gone. All they had to do was move the remaining cannons out of her range and then finish her off before she could regenerate enough. *"This isn't good. I have to do something drastic,"* Dina realized. She didn't like it whatsoever, because she knew it would leave her completely immobilized afterwards, but it was a final resort in precarious situations. She couldn't let the Military Police Brigade reload freely, and so, she focused all of her energy into a final attack.

Dina had learned while training with Reiner that she could only harden her hands, and while the ability wasn't nearly as prominent as Annie's hardening ability-since it was a lot less durable-the extreme sharpness of her claws made up for that, since she was

able to slice through almost anything with enough force. She had tried to harden other parts of her body, but only if she put all of her effort into it, something happened, and if it wasn't for Reiner's quick reflexes and sharp senses, he wouldn't even be able to retell the tale.

Now though, Dina smirked as she knew she could go all out without the fear of hurting any of her allies. She closed her eyes and allowed the energy to flow freely through her body. The outside of her titan body began to glow in a titanic hue. Focusing on hardening a random part of her body, she met that same resistance she always did. Grunting, she focused on another part, and another, fighting the resistance while her power kept building up.

Meanwhile, the Military Police Brigade watched the spectacle with fear in their eyes. The confidence that had radiated from them after destroying her legs was short-lived; they all felt something very dangerous was going to happen.

"Take cover!" the commander shouted heatedly. "Take-" he was unable to finish his sentence as Dina unleashed her attack. She finally felt that resistance melting away, but all of her built-up energy couldn't go anywhere except be forced out of her body powerfully. Dina burned brightly, steam rising from her titan. The resulting explosion was powerful enough to cover most of the battlefield. Sharp, baseball-sized lava pebbles were shot in every direction from the blast like a multi-directional machine gun. On top of getting disintegrated by the explosion, the commander was riddled with holes like a Swiss cheese; there wasn't much of him left after that.

Most of the Military Police Brigade unfortunate enough who weren't killed by the blast immediately were completely slaughtered by the pebbles. The explosion shook the ground to its core; angry black smoke rose thickly in the air and most of the vicinity was completely destroyed, the sizzling, metallic pebbles burying themselves deeply in the ground like a hellish meteor shower that had rained upon the earth below.

Dina's titan was reduced to nothing but molten flesh and bones; she couldn't move a single muscle. All she could do was hope that she'd killed most of her opponents, and if some still were alive, she banked on the fact they were either too injured to finish her off, too scared to approach her or made the assumption she was dead herself.

It felt like hours passed; the smoke and fire around her were diminishing gradually by the blowing wind. Dina finally felt some life return to her. Groaning, she exited her titan with a splitting headache and severe muscle impairment; it'd take another half hour at least before she could walk a bit again.

Looking around, all Dina saw was death and destruction and all she could hear was the sound of the wind and the smell of burning flesh. *"This eerie silence...,"* she thought with a shiver. It made her sick to her stomach. *"Sweet Ymir, please forgive me."*

She couldn't help but choke up a little, one hand clasped against her mouth while tears threatened to roll from her cheeks. Dina knew what she was getting into before this battle, and she also knew she had no other choice in her situation, but these men and women were Eldians just like she was. She had killed dozens of her own kin and she knew it'd take a long time before she'd be able to accept that. It was only now that full-blown realization hit her, and it hit her hard.

While she was sobbing silently, a shadow appeared in her periphery. A soundless croak escaped Dina's throat as one soldier-a woman, to be exact-had survived her attack with not a single scratch on her body. She was shivering like a log, but her eyes burned with justice as she pointed her rifle at Dina.

Their eyes met briefly, before a gunshot broke the eerie silence for a last time.

Kenny coughed violently, clearing his airways as he tried to get all the dirt out of his lungs. He was lying miserably on the ground, all of his joints aching as he tried to recall what had happened. *"Those*

stupid bastards from the Military Police Brigade," he realized with a growl, knowing their non-existent battle experience against a titan combined with their terrible aim caused him almost to kick the bucket. He was lucky none of his extremities were torn off because of the blast.

He tried to stand up, but that was easier said than done. He had wounds all over him-none lethal, luckily, but it was going to take a while before they would be healed fully. *"Hopefully that blast knocked out the kids, that'd spare me a lot of trouble,"* he thought, searching for his guns, but don't finding them. The blast must've reduced them to useless chunks of metal.

His hopes were quickly put to shambles when he saw two figures through the lingering smoke approaching him slowly but steadily. He could make out the kid's features; both were bloodied beyond recognition like himself, covered entirely in soot and dirt, but their expressions were as sharp as ever. Kenny chuckled-feeling that his trusty knife was still present on his body-and crossed his arms coolly.

"Well, well, you kids are a tenacious bunch, aren't you?" Kenny praised them mockingly, "and after that, you still want to fight me?" His brow was raised in doubt, challenging them and hoping they would either attack him blindly or back off.

Annie and Reiner both didn't respond. Instead, they took their battling stance, waiting patiently for Kenny to make the first move. They were well aware of the hidden knife inside his coat; if they wanted to defeat him, they had to work together. There was no way they could take him one on one.

Kenny grumbled, knowing that his trick didn't work, and grabbed his knife. "Fine then, if you kids want to throw your life away so recklessly, so be it. I don't particularly like killing off children, so I'll do it quickly." He cracked his neck, getting the terrible stiffness out of his muscles. The ache would stay, he knew, but so long as he could move, he didn't care about that.

With swift accuracy, he leaped at Reiner, figuring he'd be the strongest; so, it was in his best interest to get rid of him first. He slashed his knife horizontally, his aim impeccable and directly pointed at Reiner's exposed neck. The surprise on Reiner's face didn't go unnoticed by Kenny. Apparently, he hadn't expected him to move *that* fast.

By an inch, Reiner managed to dodge by extending his body backwards-in turn, the knife sliced over him relatively harmlessly. At that moment, everything seemed to go in slow-motion for Reiner. He saw the shine on the blade, reflecting the fear in his face for a moment, and he heard the sweeping motion of the sharp steel go past him. He hadn't realized yet Kenny managed to cut him on the cheek, the wound making fresh blood run past his face.

Even though Kenny hit him, he was a bit surprised himself that Reiner dodged most of his attack in time. *"This kid must've had some sort of training,"* he thought with a grumble. That thought proved to be correct very quickly, because while he was still mid-swing, Annie's foot had found Kenny's cheek with a powerful roundhouse kick.

Pain exploded across Kenny's throbbing skull, his loud cry akin of a furious and wounded animal. Annie tried to follow it up with another kick across his other cheek, but he blocked it with his arm, a loud thud echoing through his body when the attack hit him. *"I can't underestimate these kids,"* he thought with horror, knowing now that this fight was going to be anything but easy. While he blocked Annie's foot, he tried to grab it with the intent to stab his knife right through her leg.

Kenny's grin turned wider when he saw Annie gasp, realizing too late what he planned to do. However, Reiner had recovered enough to deliver a punch in Kenny's gut, knocking the wind out of him before bashing him away with his shoulder, making him stumble. "Annie, are you all right?" Reiner questioned worriedly.

She nodded her head. "I'm fine. Just look after yourself," she stated, pointing to the cut on his cheek. Reiner touched his cheek to see his blood paint his fingers red. He grumbled a little, but then recomposed himself. "I will, Annie. let's keep at it."

Meanwhile, Kenny laughed, spitting out some blood that had accumulated in his mouth. "You kids are a bit tougher than I expected, I'll give you that," he admitted, clutching his upset stomach a little. "However, I'm done playing games now." He roared at the top of his lungs; the glint that appeared in his eyes animalistic. It appeared he was going for Reiner again, but at the last moment, he threw his knife at Annie with a crooked smirk on his face.

The sharp object flew at Annie with incredible speed. She could only raise up both of her arms in defense, which made the blade go cleanly through her underarm out of the other side. Intense pain radiated from her arm all the way through her body, a mind-numbing, shooting sensation that had her screaming as blood rushed out of the wound while Kenny's knife was still stuck in it, the sharp end of the blade just inches away from her face. If the blade had been any longer, she would've lost an eye.

Reiner had no time to respond to this new predicament; Kenny was on top of him in an instant, his fist connected with his nose and knocked him off his feet. He moaned in absolute pain; his nose clearly broken as blood spew forth from it.

Kenny laughed again, seeing how Annie was on her knees, clutching her arm while Reiner was clearly disoriented. "This is what happens when you mess with grown-ups and grown-ups' stuff, kids. I don't know who you are, but I have every intention of finding out. Even if that means I have to torture you," he said maliciously, kicking Reiner in his stomach while he was trying to get up.

Grabbing him by his hair, Kenny lifted him in the air, which made Reiner cry out in pain. "You're not from around here, that is for sure," he mused, "are you from the underground, perhaps?"

Reiner just hissed and tried to struggle futilely, which made Kenny shrug. "Figured you didn't want to talk." He hurled him towards Annie, making them both crash into each other painfully.

"However, I have methods for that," he continued, cracking his knuckles. "Let's see here." He was about to grab Reiner again-who was lying on top what Kenny thought was an unconscious Annie-when Annie kicked upwards, hitting him in the wrist and making his pink bend the complete opposite way, breaking it in multiple places.

Kenny's cry was deep; his hand flinching backwards at the sudden strike. "What..." he hissed, seeing how Reiner had put extra pressure on Annie's wound, making sure she wasn't bleeding out. He smartly hadn't taken out the knife whatsoever, and with the time given to them, they went on the offense.

Like an oiled machine they attacked together; Reiner used his fists to deliver the heavy blows while Annie stayed in the back, using only her legs to provide back-up. Kenny hissed as Reiner managed to land a punch on his nose, giving Annie enough time to kick him hard in his liver. He tried to create some space for himself by backing up, but both Annie and Reiner didn't relent whatsoever. Their flurry of blows caught Kenny off guard completely.

" Their tenacity is incredible. If they keep this up, they might overwhelm me," Kenny thought, his mind reeling as it dawned on him that he was in a serious predicament right now. *"Am I seriously going down to two random kids?"* Kenny didn't want to believe it, but every time he tried to attack Reiner, Annie would be there to block it for him, and he couldn't get to Annie because Reiner was protecting her in turn.

Reiner saw this too. He knew it was possible to take out Kenny, but he had to consider Annie's condition too. If they dragged out the battle for too long, chances were present that Annie would faint because of blood loss. Therefore, he did something bold.

He completely let himself be open for attack, charging Kenny like a bull, and the mercenary took it with open arms. He tried to kick Reiner's face with the intention to knock him out cold, but Reiner moved his head out of the way just in time so it was his shoulder that took the beating. He was sure he heard something crack, but full on adrenaline as he was, he tackled Kenny's legs anyway, bringing him down to the ground.

"Now, Annie!" Reiner screamed, hoping they had enough time for his plan to work. Annie wasted no time and leaped on top of Kenny like a lioness. With her arm still impaled with Kenny's knife, she brought it down to his chest while grabbing the hilt for leverage and extra strength to push it down, having every intent to stab the pointy end straight through his heart.

Kenny's eyes widened significantly and out of pure reflex grabbed Annie's hand, halting her downwards momentum just in time. He struggled to push her hand away, using every fiber of his being to do so. Kenny's mind was screaming out to him to do something, and with strength he hadn't thought he possessed, used his other hand with his broken pinky to grab Annie's arm as well, completely ignoring the pain and shifting the momentum in his favour.

Slowly, he was pushing her away, trying with all his might to turn the sharp end of the blade around so he could impale it in her throat. *"C'mon, you brat,"* he thought maliciously, his confidence returning, *"Just a bit more before you can taste my blade."*

However, he had forgotten to take into account that Reiner was still up and running as well. With a loud roar, Reiner grabbed both of Annie's hands and started to push it downwards as well, grunting all the way as he tried to overpower Kenny.

To Kenny's horror, they actually started to succeed. The sharp tip of the blade was inching closer to his chest, which made his breathing quicken and his chest heave. "Wait... Wait!" he sputtered out in denial, hoping he could somehow change their mind.

However, with a sudden push, the tip of the blade disappeared inside Kenny's chest, who looked on in pure disbelief. His strength started to fade, and his breath became heavy and filled with blood as more and more of his knife was buried in his chest cavity, inevitably reaching his heart. He gurgled and started to spasm helplessly as Annie and Reiner finished the job, pushing the blade in as far as it was able to.

The life inside his eyes disappeared, and his hands fell uselessly to his sides. Both Annie and Reiner stopped pushing, the former slowly retracting the blade seemingly emotionlessly while the latter looked on worriedly. "We need to take you to Grisha immediately," Reiner stated, not giving any attention to Kenny's corpse as he stood up and helped Annie up as well.

"You'll need to help me then," Annie admitted, her face sweating and her eyes pale. It was a miracle she was still standing after losing so much blood. Reiner supported her protectively, carrying most of her weight as they stumbled like broken soldiers over the battlefield, but on the inside, they felt like proud warriors coming home from a massive victory.

If Grisha thought the situation couldn't escalate any further, then he was in for a big surprise. At the moment, he was sweating profusely as he examined the unconscious form of Historia. Her pulse was growing weak, which indicated she was losing blood internally. This was a worse case scenario for a multitude of reasons, one of them being that she needed medical attention quickly or else she wouldn't survive.

The fact her blood pooled in her mouth and then slowly dribbled out of it made Grisha assume she most likely had torn a structure in her upper torso. He wiped the sweat away from his face as he palpated her sternum and costae, desperately trying to feel if he could locate any abnormalities underneath that gave away what structure was damaged.

" Her heart is still pumping; the fact she isn't losing blood very quickly is a big relief as well. It means her aorta is probably intact. The inferior and superior vena cava look to have been spared as well. Her lungs however..." Grisha thought, noticing how raspy and irregular her breathing pattern had become.

" It has to be one of the lung cavities; if there's a tear I need to stitch it, but in conditions like these..." His nervousness was growing. He was ill equipped to perform such an intense procedure in the middle of nowhere. Moreover, Historia was covered entirely in dirt and soot. Chances of an infection were huge and he had no idea which cavity was damaged; there was simply no way to find out in such a short period of time without the proper tools, which Paradis didn't even have anyway.

" I have no choice. I have to do an improvised operation." Grisha sucked in a lung full of air. He knew how many things could go wrong. The chances of succeeding were highly improbable, starting with the fact Historia needed fresh blood to even get *through* this surgery.

" You need to start a transfusion," a voice inside his mind whispered. Sweat started to appear over Grisha's face all over again. *"But I don't even know her blood type. I'm not a universal donor, so what if her body rejects it? She could have an ABO Incompatibility Reaction. I have to bet on the chance she is AB and therefore a universal receiver."* Gambling with a life so carelessly like that was something Grisha would *never* do if the circumstances were any different.

" Do it," that same voice whispered. He nodded his head, already getting the necessary materials ready; he knew there was no other option available. Getting the blood flowing through a needle and a fresh bag, Grisha prepared himself mentally.

That's all for now, people! Did you like it, love it, hate it? Please leave a review! I love to read and respond to them all! Until next time. :)

~Syrup-Waffle

Battle for Paradis: Confrontations

Welcome back, people! I hope all of you have had a wonderful month! Here's the next chapter, please enjoy! :D

~Nigga-san: NOOOOO! Did Dina really die? That sucks, she could have been the mother Historia never had.

That's assuming Historia is going to make it as well. ;)

~Shiranai Atsune: YAY! A NEW UPDATE! YES! Who are they gonna give the other Titan powers?

I have some candidates in mind, but nothing is certain yet about that.

~Guest: I love this alternative story, it is the best, I wonder if the next chapter will be Levi vs Eren.

Thank you! You will find out this chapter! ^^

~Guest: Update soon!

Hope this is soon enough! :)

~Guest: So intense, but time will kill the excitement. Sad. I hate it that it took so long to update. Please be considerate to your followers.

I always try my best, but sometimes, real life isn't so kind to you.

~Guest: Ummm... where is Armin?

He is home in Shiganshina right now. :P

~Ellie: This story is phenomenal! (...) I was wondering if we are going to be seeing Armin, Sasha, Connie, Jean, and Marco in the later chapters? (...)

Thanks a lot for your kind words! :D Yes, we will be seeing them in the later chapters for sure!

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

Nile Dawk, commander of the Military Police Brigade, considered himself to be a very rational human being. He always prided himself for looking at every possible option and outcome before making a decision. Therefore, he was never totally committed to one way. So, when all hell broke loose in the interior and the Garrison started to rebel against the fraud king and the nobility who controlled him, Nile was incredibly indecisive deep down.

He knew his heart was loyal to the nobility who had managed to keep everything peaceful for one-hundred years, but the lie they had put forth was mind boggling and had angered him beyond comprehension. *"I wonder,"* he thought with gritted teeth as he ordered his men to stand their ground and defend the interior with everything they had, *" what other secrets they are hiding if they have to resort to such a lie."*

"Listen up, men! Don't let the Garrison come beyond this line. They are not allowed, under any circumstance, to get inside the palace and confront the king and the nobility, understood?"

"Sir, yes sir!" they all yelled loyally.

" Because after this is over," Nile thought, loading his rifle with a sour taste in his mouth, *" I will confront the royal families myself."*

His tactic against the Garrison was simple, he'd set up a three-layer defense around the palace where every ring of fire would be back-up for the next ring. Heavy artillery in the back, light artillery in the middle and the foot soldiers at the front line. Since they were defending, they had all the advantage in the world.

" The area is secured and most civilians have been safely evacuated, so if there's going to be any more blood spilled today, it'll be all people who've sworn with their lives to protect the state. Now we only have to wait for the Garrison to arrive."

Nile didn't have to wait for long. For some reason, he wasn't surprised to see that it was Dot Pixis who lead the way, but what he didn't expect was the young teenager who walked right next to him. Both of their faces were filled with determination; something that Nile didn't like one bit. *"They are serious about going all the way with this coup,"* he thought, hissing to himself. Nile had hoped he would've been able to have some room for negotiation, but the way how Dot and the boy carried themselves just radiated a strength that told him they would not be able to be persuaded. Still, Nile wasn't going to mindlessly fire at them and start a potential bloodbath that could've easily been avoided-something that Dot knew as well, hence why he wasn't afraid in the slightest when he stepped forward and raised his voice.

"Captain Nile Dawk, as general of the Garrison, I speak on behalf of everybody involved in this coup that we should solve this little feud in a manner that both suits us well," he roared, his lion-like voice thundering all across the pavements and the homes the Military Police Brigade had barricaded off.

Nile would never understand where Dot could keep so much air and still produce enough volume to put a titan's roar to shame. He shook his head mentally; he was happy Dot wanted to negotiate, at least. *"Although I have no idea who the boy is yet. Is he important in any way that he stands so firm and strong at Dot's side?"* he wondered. Nile could only speculate at this point, so he answered Dot's offer to

negotiate firmly. "What would that be, general Dot Pixis? Certainly not our immediate surrender, right?"

Dot's solid steel expression softened somewhat to make room for a small grin. "I wouldn't expect you to. However," he continued, mentioning to the boy, "I possess information that might change our future forever."

Nile perked one of his brows. *"Is he talking about the kid? What information would he have that could change our future?"* He had trouble believing Dot, but he was interested to hear what they had to say for sure. "Go on," he uttered.

"Very well. Allow me to introduce Eren Yeager. He knows all about the secrets surrounding the titans and how to destroy them once and for all. However, this is only possible if we unify and work together. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we trust each other," Dot responded. The shocked murmurs that filled the air by the Military Police Brigade were almost palpable. Even Nile was gasping as the boy named Eren took over and let his voice be heard.

"I know it is hard to believe, because the secrets surrounding the titans are not easily accepted. I, however, will be willing to show you that I have proof about the secrets surrounding the titans, if I have your word that you won't fire. I trust you enough that you will," Eren spoke resolutely to Nile. If the circumstances were any different, Nile would've laughed, but the situation was so ridiculous that he couldn't help but agree. *"He doesn't look a day older than twelve. What is going on?"* he murmured. Shaking his head mentally, he figured he'd just try to approach this with an open mind. "All right then. You have my word. Show me the proof you are speaking of."

Eren nodded his head and two women stepped forwards from the army of the Garrison. Nile recognized the older woman as Frieda Reiss, the daughter of Rod Reiss. The Reiss family was well respected under the ranks of the Military Police Brigade, so seeing her amidst the Garrison proved to be another huge shock. The

younger girl was around Eren's age. Nile couldn't identify her, but he was certain he was going to be introduced to her very soon.

"Good afternoon, loyal men and women from the Military Police Brigade," Frieda said sweetly. "As most of you may know, my name is Frieda Reiss and I will be representing Eren Yeager's proof. Next to me is Ymir and she has the ability to turn into a titan."

If the whole scene wasn't ludicrous enough, Nile was sure that he had hit his head and that he was dreaming right now. He eyed his fellow men and women, who were either looking at Frieda if she had grown an extra head, or sweating profusely while whispering nonsense. *"Either they are insane, or this Eren Yeager has the ability to hypnotize people at will,"* Nile thought, his head throbbing at the prospect there were people who could turn willingly into the monstrosities that had almost wiped out humanity. *"Still, it's very clever to make Frieda Reiss of all people show it off. The fact she is well respected make their claims very credible."*

Frieda's smile didn't waver at the pure radiance of disbelief she got in turn. This was to be expected, so she continued like nothing was wrong whatsoever. "Please allow me to demonstrate. Ymir?"

Nile watched incredulously as Ymir cut herself with a knife in her open palm. Immediately, a bright yellow thunder cracked down from the sky above, where Ymir stood just a second ago. The miniature quake and the bright flash made most of the Military Police Brigade cry out in panic. The resulting smoke obscured their vision, but when it cleared, a five-meter class titan stood in the place of Ymir.

Most of the Military Police Brigade trembled, their weapons raised in defiance at the undeniable black magic they just witnessed. "Hold your fire!" Nile shouted out in obvious fear himself. He wasn't sure what to make of this situation, but one thing was certain, Eren was probably speaking the truth.

"Captain!?" some of his men croaked in utter stupor. They'd never seen a titan before in their life, and now all of a sudden, they were

face to face with one in the deepest part of wall Sina and they couldn't attack it?

"I made a promise to Eren Yeager, and I tend to keep that promise," Nile elaborated, "besides, the titan known as Ymir hasn't done anything yet. She is just standing there." That seemed to calm down the Military Police Brigade somewhat. Tensely, they waited, wondering how this was going to end.

Frieda smiled and continued her speech. "Please don't be afraid. This is merely an example to show that Eren Yeager has the answers that we've been looking for. He is willing to share all the information that he knows about the titans, in exchange that the *real* royal family will rule behind the walls." She paused for a moment, before continuing, "which would be the Reiss family."

Nile's eyes widened once more. "*So that means Frieda would be the new ruler?*" It suddenly started to dawn on him that all of this was awfully convenient for Rod Reiss and Frieda. He didn't know yet what Dot Pixis would get out of it, or even this Eren Yeager, but he wasn't going to give them a free pass until he'd questioned the higher-ups himself.

"Frieda Reiss, this demonstration is over," Nile responded sharply. "I will give you five minutes to retreat peacefully, or we will open fire."

Frieda bowed her head respectfully. "As you wish, captain. I shall make my leave now." She eyed Dot for a moment, who nodded his head. He too, made his leave. However, Eren and Ymir made no attempt to move yet.

"Eren Yeager, this is my final warning," Nile shouted, confused why the boy was still standing there. "if you haven't moved in exactly three minutes from now, I will show no mercy. Take your titan with you and get out of here."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, captain," Eren responded coolly and resolutely. "I will reform Paradis one way or the other, and right now,

you are standing in our way. I rather not resort to violence, but if that is what it takes, then so be it."

Nile was surprised his head hadn't exploded yet from all the throbbing it did. *"Reform Paradis? What is he talking about?"* He couldn't comprehend how this kid could stand there like a seasoned war general and not be afraid whatsoever. "Enough! My patience is running thin. I will count to ten and then you'll either walk away or we will blow you away instead!"

A small, confident smirk appeared on Eren's face as he cracked his neck. "You ready, Ymir? Just as we planned." He suddenly bit down on the skin of his hand. With growing dread and realization, Nile's suspicions were confirmed violently. The streets shook on their foundations and the blast of Eren's transformation made Nile's inner ears pop and ring. Anxiety gripped him around the throat when the smoke cleared enough to see another titan standing in Eren's place, this one *a lot* bigger than Ymir. He roared loudly, intimidating the Military Police Brigade while Ymir climbed on his shoulder.

"This is-" Nile hissed to himself before he recognized the stance Eren had taken; he was preparing for a sprint and about to ram himself straight through all three layers of his defense. "Fire the cannons!" Nile screamed at the top of his lungs. "Stop those titans from advancing! Don't let them through!"

However, just as Nile had expected, the panic that had broken out between his ranks had everybody in a frenzy. People were screaming bloody murder and abandoning their posts left and right. In the end, his command wasn't even heard. *"So, this is how I will meet my end?"* Nile thought, his whole body petrified as Eren started his dash. His feet pulverized the street's cobble stone when he set off, his humongous frame making it inevitable that buildings were damaged left and right from him. All the while, he came closer and closer in turning Nile into nothing more than a bloody paste.

Just as Nile thought everything was over-closing his eyes to the impending doom that loomed over him, quite literally so-Eren

skidded to a halt, kicking up rubble, pebbles and a lot of dust, which surprisingly all zoomed past Nile without hitting him. When he opening his eyes again, he was face to face with Eren's shins.

He looked up to see Eren giving him a quick glance, before he ignored him completely. *"He stopped... but why?"* Nile thought hoarsely, his heart beating a mile a minute. His answer came shortly afterwards.

"Oi, captain, take your men and leave this area," Levi spoke, his voice a bit surprised by the spectacle Eren had caused, but mostly annoyed. All around him vertical maneuvering equipment were being shot down as Eld Jinn, Oluo Bozado, Petra Ral and Gunther Schultz accompanied him from the higher vantage points they'd been occupying. "Sir, there are no more immediate titans in the area," Gunther reported, "the Garrison has retreated a far amount, probably not to get caught up in the crossfire of the titans' destruction."

Levi nodded his head, eyeing his opponents up and down. "Leave them for now. These two titans here actually have a functioning brain. If I have to guess, they will not go down easily." On the outside, Levi didn't show any emotion, but on the inside, he had seen the slight hesitance that appeared in Eren's movements the moment he spotted him. *"He knows I am dangerous. I can't underestimate him."* He beckoned to his squad with a wave of his hand. "Get ready for battle, this will take us every bit of effort we can muster." Drawing his blades while his team did the same, he patiently waited what Eren and Ymir were going to do in retaliation.

Eren was cursing every single swear word he knew at the top of his head. His plan had been simple: since the Military Police Brigade wasn't exactly known for their bravery, he was going to bluff crushing them into oblivion in the hopes they'd get so scared that they would flee. His simple deduction proved to be correct when he started his intimidating sprint; most of his opponents didn't know how fast they had to scramble. Eren had smirked inwardly. He didn't like the Military Police Brigade whatsoever because of its obvious corruption

between the ranks. Still, that didn't mean he was going to kill them all if he could avoid it.

Happy as he had been that his plan seemingly worked out, turned into immediate horror when he saw the last person he wanted to see blocking his path. *"There is no way!"* he thought, his heart suddenly beating a mile a minute. *"What is Levi doing here?"* Eren grumbled as he eyed Humanity's Strongest up and down, completely ignoring Nile Dawk who had turned into a statue at his feet.

"He should be on an expedition outside the walls. But if he is here, then that means..." Just as he was thinking it, Levi's elite squad joined him at his side. Eren remembered them like yesterday. It was just odd seeing them five years younger. *"This isn't good. Ymir has way too little battle experience to be facing off against them. Levi needs every ounce of my attention if I want to defeat him without killing him."* If Eren was honest with himself, he wasn't even sure that he could kill Levi even if he wanted to. He looked at Ymir worryingly and nodded twice: the signal for her to retreat. *"She needs Bertolt's and Mikasa's back up,"* he reasoned. *"In the meantime, I have to hold off Levi as best as I can."*

Ymir didn't hesitate to follow Eren's order. She recognized Levi and his squad from the composition drawings his father had made for them and knew how dangerous they were. *"Eren, please be careful,"* she thought, the worry almost palpable in her movements as she jumped from his shoulder and took a run for it. She half expected she wouldn't be followed, but those hopes were instantly crushed when three of Levi's team members took after her in hot pursuit with their vertical maneuvering equipment. Eren let them go after Ymir without even bothering to stop them; he knew she could outrun them and be able to fight them with Bertolt's and Mikasa's help. He wasn't surprised to see that Levi had ordered Petra to stay at his side. She was the youngest of the group and he probably thought she'd be safer if he could protect her directly.

"You've never shown much emotion on the outside about your recruits," Eren thought, his hands turning to fists, *"but on the inside,*

you care a lot about them, and Petra has always been special to you, hasn't she?" He took one menacing step forwards, careful not to crush Nile as he did so, since he was still under Medusa's spell underneath him. *"Don't worry. I'll not hurt her. You however, are far too dangerous. I apologize in advance if I break a few bones..."* His next step had more power to it, his eyes calm and calculated. *"Now come at me!"*

Eren roared at the top of his lungs, his quick dash speeding him up, hoping to catch Levi off guard. *"He's going to dodge and do his famous tornado spin on your arm the moment you try to punch him to oblivion, just like he did to Annie and Zeke,"* his mind whispered to him. Predicting this, he didn't turn his fist to steel-like proportions, but rather his wrist. The moment Levi would initiate the attack, his blades would instantly get pulverized if they hit his wrist, rendering the rest of the attack completely useless.

Eren brought his fist down, but held back considerably in speed. Even if he knew Levi was going to dodge his attack if he put all of his effort into it, he didn't want to risk permanently injuring him if he could avoid it. Levi's expression didn't change one bit and, just like Eren thought, showed him his Ackerman instincts by preparing himself for his spin attack. He shot his grappling hook into Eren's shoulder, dodged his fist easily and was confident he was going to slice Eren's entire arm into nothing but pieces of ham.

His gasp when Eren's wrist destroyed his blades made Eren smirk inwardly. *"That's two blades down. Six to go."* However, if Eren thought Levi would back off from his attack, he made a grave error. Humanity's Strongest kept up his spinning attack, not doing any damage, but changing his broken blades *while* he was still spinning. When he had reached Eren's shoulder, he was high above him from the momentum he had created, both new blades shining brightly in the sun with every intent to strike him down.

"Your nape!" Eren's thoughts screamed to him, yet his rational side protected his eyes instead by covering it up with one of his hands. It proved to be the right decision, because Levi's precision cut off four

of his fingers. Steaming hot blood splattered out of the wounds while Levi shot another grappling hook into one of the walls of a nearby building, landing on it and using the counter-momentum to jump off of it and throw himself back at Eren again.

" You know he's fast, Eren. Stop being stupefied," he scolded himself as he looked at his cut off fingers lying on the ground uselessly. Instead of defending himself against Levi's incoming assault, Eren made the wise decision to jump forwards, ensnaring Levi's grappling hook and throwing him completely off trajectory.

Levi hissed at the smart tactic. He had to unhook himself less he was going to be slammed into a wall violently. He caught himself by shooting another two grappling hooks into the ground to stop his velocity. The sudden change in momentum made his body cry out in protest. He landed on the pavement with a roll, tsking to himself. *"He predicted every single move I did so far. He must've studied me well to be able to do so."*

While Levi was getting another good read of his opponent, Petra was high into the air behind Eren, coming down on his nape to slice it open like a turkey. Her battle cry was loud and powerful, but the simple hardening trick Eren did to protect his nape was enough to break her blades like they were made of glass. Petra's eyes widened significantly as Eren stared at her in response. She backed off immediately, but noticed for some odd reason that he didn't even try to attack her. She landed safely next to Levi, her voice pitched higher than normal as she spoke to him.

"Captain, what do we do now? Our blades don't do anything to him if he hardens his skin like that!" It was obvious Petra was in a bit of panic. Levi didn't respond immediately, but when he did, his voice was just as calm as usual. "He's holding back," he responded. "His intention isn't to kill us, but rather to make us run out of gas and blades. If we're going for a war of attrition, we are surely going to lose. Petra, we are going to retreat for now."

"Captain?" she whispered, not believing her ears. "Are we just going to allow him to reach the higher-ups and kill them?"

"No, because he is going to follow us," he replied without a single bit of doubt. "He knows we are way more important to keep an eye on than those nobles. He isn't going to do anything to them until he has defeated us. Now let's go!" Levi shot his grappling hook away from Eren, making his retreat while Petra did the same. Just like he had predicted, Eren began to run after them, not at full speed, but enough to keep up with them.

Petra looked back at the Attack Titan with amazement in her eyes, but also a million questions. *"Why isn't he trying to attack us now? What are your intentions with all of this? Who are you truly, Eren Yeager?"*

When Ymir was training with Eren into controlling her titan properly, she was ecstatic how fast she was when running on all fours. She felt like a Cheetah as she moved through the different streets, trying to shake off her pursuers. It seemed to work somewhat, because even though their mobility was greater than hers, she was simply too fast. *"Just one more corner before I have the back-up I need,"* Ymir thought, her confidence returning somewhat.

Eld and Gunther were so focused on keeping up that they completely failed to notice the trap they'd fallen in. Oluo, however, had a lot more experience, and recognized the open space immediately as a potential dead-trap to be shot from in every direction. "Scatter!" he shouted, pushing his teammates away from each other just in the nick of time. Not a second later, multiple gunshots were heard in the distance. Bullets ricocheted off of Oluo's vertical maneuvering equipment, puncturing a hole in one of the gas tanks and making one of his grappling hooks malfunction.

He gritted his teeth and brought himself down to the ground, hiding behind the fountain that stood tall and proud in the middle of the

plaza. He hoped they weren't surrounded, otherwise he was done for.

"Oluo!" Eld screamed, trying to give his teammate, who arguably just saved his life, the back-up he needed in this precarious situation. However, out of nowhere, Ymir turned around and went on the offense, slicing her claw at Eld and catching him completely off guard. He could only watch and protect his face in a reflex, knowing he wasn't going to survive this one. He expected incredible pain to radiate through his whole body before he would die and drop out of the sky like a sack of flour, but instead he felt Ymir's claw wrap around him rather roughly. Her swipe still knocked the wind out of him and probably gave him a light concussion in the process, but he was pretty much alive, still.

She growled at him menacingly, which made him whimper and scared shitless. *"Oh please, don't eat me,"* he thought, his whole body shivering in incredible fear. She simply brought her other hand to his vertical maneuvering equipment and crushed it, before putting Eld down. He looked at her in absolute confusion, not understanding why she didn't kill him. Instead, she gently flicked one of her fingers against his face, rendering him unconscious and knocking him out of the battle.

"That's one," she thought with extreme satisfaction, *"now where is that guy who Mikasa and Bertolt managed to hit?"* Ymir looked around, but couldn't find him anywhere. She didn't have much time to ponder where he went, because Gunther came in with the counter attack.

"You bastard!" he screamed at the top of his lungs, slicing at Ymir's right hand and severing it straight from her wrist. She looked at it dumbly for a moment, not yet realizing she lost one of her claws before Gunther came down and scooped up Eld's unconscious body. *"I have to get him out of here,"* he thought quickly. *"I just hope Oluo is all right..."* While he was flying away, Ymir picked up her hand from the ground in almost a daze.

" *He just sliced it off,*" she thought in complete stupor, her shock greater than she would've expected. She knew it was just going to regrow, but it was the first time in her life that she lost a part of one of her limbs. Her surprise turned to rage as she saw Gunther retreating. "*So, you want my claw, right?*" she thought, tightening her other hand around it with a low growl, "*Well, here you go then!*" she brought her arm back, and with an accuracy that would put the Beast Titan to shame, threw her *own hand* at Gunther, her claws facing forwards with every intention to hurt him severely.

" *What the-*" Gunther thought while hissing in panic. He tried to change his trajectory, but Ymir's claw was almost a bullet. It punctured straight through his vertical maneuvering equipment, the top of her sharp claws burying themselves in his back. He cried out in pain, his whole body screaming at him as he lost control and crashed to the ground.

Gunther had never felt so much pain in his life. He was completely left defenseless as Ymir intimidatingly approached him and Eld's unconscious body. He knew it was over at this point "*Eld, please forgive me for not being able to protect you,*" he thought as he closed his eyes for the inevitable end of his life.

Bertolt was impressed by Mikasa's impeccable aim. They had both managed to hit Oluo's vertical maneuvering equipment from a pretty respectable distance and take him out of the battle. They were now focusing on the battle that was going on between Ymir, Eld and Gunther, but seeing that she was handling them pretty well, they weren't too worried about that. "Keep your eyes on the perimeter," Bertolt suggested wisely, "if there are any people of the Military Police Brigade trying to intervene, we need to be prepared and take them out before they can overwhelm Ymir."

"Right!" Mikasa agreed, her eyes as sharp as an eagle. She had made a promise to Eren, and she was going to prove to him that she could keep that promise. "*I hope he's doing okay. If he sent Ymir on the retreat so quickly, it can only mean he is battling this Levi he was*

talking about." Mikasa was still a bit uncomfortable she shared the same last name as him. It probably meant Eren knew all about her heritage as well. She was dying to ask him all about it, but figured she'd wait until after the battle. *"After all,"* she'd reasoned, *"the information may distract me from my task, which is providing back-up for Ymir."*

While she was so focused, she almost failed to notice that somebody had sneakily climbed up the tower they had taken refuge in-almost. Bertolt turned around as quickly as he could as he spotted the intruder, hissing like a snake as he stood face to face with none other than Oluo himself. Somehow, he had managed to escape their eyes and taken them by surprise. Bertolt tried to aim his rifle at him, but Oluo stopped him by grabbing it, his physical strength easily overpowering him wasn't it for Mikasa.

"Bertolt!" she cried, using a shoulder bash to knock Oluo off balance. He grunted, but still managed to take Bertolt's rifle and throw it off of the tower. He saw that Mikasa still had a firm grip of her own weapon, so before he could get the answers he wanted, he had to disarm her as well. *"Still, two children, not older than twelve, and they both managed to hit my vertical maneuvering equipment from that distance?"* Oluo didn't know if he should be impressed or surprised. Either way, he wasn't about to take their lives. Oluo considered himself a killer if the situation asked for it, but he certainly wasn't a child murderer. Thinking quickly, he did a low kick with his right leg, hoping to make Mikasa trip and fall.

To his absolute stupor, however, she dodged it like it was the easiest thing in the world and stomped the blunt end of her weapon against his nose in retaliation. Oluo cried out in pain as his nose erupted into blood, stumbling backwards a bit because of the sudden dizziness that overtook him. He wanted to grab one of his blades, but Mikasa had her rifle pointed to him at point blank range before he could even attempt it. "Stop right there, Oluo, or else I won't hesitate to pull the trigger," she said, her voice dead serious.

Oluo couldn't believe it, but this girl certainly packed a punch and had outplayed him that easily. He chuckled and raised both his hands in mock surrender. "You got me. You have some nice reflexes there, young lady," he complimented her, trying to placate her as best as he could. *"How does she even know my name, though?"* he thought in bewilderment.

Mikasa harrumphed, still keeping her rifle pointed at him while Bertolt stripped him off of his vertical maneuvering equipment. "Don't try anything funny," he suggested angrily, "because I know for a fact she isn't messing around."

Oluo didn't say anything and allowed himself to be disarmed. When he was, Bertolt ordered him to get on his knees. He complied without question, showing no sign of resistance. Then, Bertolt beckoned to Mikasa with his hand. "Keep a good eye on him. I'll grab some rope and tie him up."

She nodded her head, her eyes never leaving Oluo's. He continued to stay as idle as possible, especially when Bertolt got behind him to tie his hands behind his back. "You know," he said suddenly, making Mikasa tense up while his hands were still raised high into the air, "rifles like yours are very sensitive. A grain of sand or a loose bolt makes the thing jam and completely useless."

"What is he talking about?" Mikasa thought in confusion. Her question was soon answered as her eyes steadily grew in horror when Oluo calmly opened one of his palms to show the bolt that regulated the hammer mechanism on her rifle. *"What-"* She pulled the trigger, but it only made a clicking sound. *"Did he really disarm my rifle when I attacked him? How!?"* she thought in disbelief, panic overtaking her. "Bertolt!" she cried out, but she was already too late.

Oluo suddenly elbowed Bertolt straight in the face when he least expected it, making him crash to the ground violently, his nose broken while he screamed and thrashed around in pain. Mikasa's moment of panic was all Oluo needed to turn the ties into his favor. He threw his body forwards, pushing Mikasa back until he had her at

the edge of the tower. "Now," he continued calmly, not underestimating his opponents anymore, "if you don't *accidentally* want to fall from this tower and kiss the cold hard ground, I suggest you will listen to what I tell you to do."

Mikasa's heart was beating a mile a minute as she nodded her head in defeat, closing her eyes in shame. "*I am so sorry, Eren,*" she thought, trying to hold back her tears, "*I failed you.*"

That's all for now, people! Did you like it, love it, hate it? Replying to reviews is my passion, so definitely leave your thoughts below! Next chapter should wrap this arc up, so hang in tight, people! Until then. ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Battle for Paradis: Endgame

Apologies for the delay of this chapter, people. In real life stuff and huge writers block was all keeping me from finishing this chapter. This was the first time I wasn't really sure of how the chapter turned out either, so I requested the help of my good friend ARCEUS-master to beta-read it for me. Thanks a lot for that, dude! :D If you like Pokémon, I suggest to check out his stories! He recently started a new one where I'm the beta-reader of! With that said, onward to the chapter! Enjoy! :3

Also, as a side-note, as of chapter 121 of the manga, this story is officially Alternate Universe.

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

As Eren chased Levi and Petra through the interior, he couldn't help but get a deep sense of déjà vu. He had been contemplating if Levi had figured out his war of attrition plan or not, because if he had, Eren knew he had to be extremely cautious from now on. *"Still, this reminds me a lot of that time I was chasing Annie around in Stohess District,"* he thought, recalling the bittersweet memories as he charged ahead, with his large feet making the ground rumble ominously underneath him. He knew it had ended in a victory for him, but in the process, it costed the lives of a few thousand innocent civilians and almost irreversibly tainted the image of the Survey Corps because of his actions. *"I won't let that happen again!"* he growled to himself, giving no real effort to catch up to Levi or Petra. *"I am older now."*

Eren had to chuckle to himself as that thought sank in. It was true that his mind was twenty-five years old, but his body was still only

that of a twelve-year-old boy. It really took some time to get used to that, but once Eren got the hang of it, he really didn't think about it anymore. The fact all subjects of Ymir were connected to each other through invisible paths that transcended even time and space itself made it very easy for Eren to accept his new role. *"Even more so because the founding titan is the root that keeps the Tree of Yggdrasil together."* His eyes sharpened as Levi and Petra suddenly made a tight turn to the right.

"I am sure there's a damn good reason I was sent back," he reassured himself, turning right as well and easily keeping up the pace with the fleeing Levi and Petra. *"Eren Krueger said it himself to my father. If we don't want history to repeat itself over and over again, then we have to change something. I'll be that change!"* Getting out of his thoughts, memories flooded through Eren's mind as he eyed his surroundings carefully.

"Something's off. I've been here before," Eren realized as he thought of the pair of fleeing soldiers and their suspicious rightwards turn earlier, *"Or have I?"* It looked very familiar to him for some reason, but he couldn't quite place it yet. That was, until his eyes widened in sudden horror and realization just as he rounded a corner following another strange turn by Levi and Petra. It immediately became clear to him that Levi and Petra's fleeing direction wasn't as random as he previously thought it was. There was a clear directional intent because right in front of Eren's titan form, on a building's rooftop, was one of the few Survey Corps soldiers Eren was deeply wary of. It was none other than Commander Erwin Smith himself.

Time seemed to freeze as the two locked eyes with each other for an agonizing moment, as if nothing else around them mattered. Erwin was looking at him calmly, his trap set, and it seemed Eren had walked right into it. All around Eren, on the roofs and lining the street, were multiple spear cannons that were ready to shoot and hook him into the ground, much like how they'd caught Annie two times in the

past. *"I can't believe I forgot about Erwin of all people and something this obvious!"* Eren berated himself loudly.

There was no time to harden himself either, the only thing he could do was try to avoid as much of the spears as possible in a sudden jerk-reflex. So, when Erwin's expression hardened into the cunning veteran he had always been, shouting "Fire!" at the top of his lungs and bringing his arm down to give the signal to let loose all the power they had available, Eren did *exactly* that.

A mighty thunder boomed across the district as dozens upon dozens of spear cannons fired all at once, igniting the area in a dazzling and violent display of rapid yellow flashes while letting loose a thick cloud of grey smoke in the process. As hell itself was let loose around him, Eren relaxed his upper-torso muscles, leaning back as far as he could. Then, he abruptly stopped running and dropped to the ground, effectively sliding across it due to his ongoing forward momentum and in turn avoiding most of the spears that had been aimed at his upper body, which were shot downwards from above.

Still, he was unable to avoid all of the onslaught. Most of the spears aimed at his lower body still hit their target. The blasts of the cannons continuously going off were deafening. Eren grunted as the momentum of his slide was violently stopped in its tracks, he had been carrying so much force behind it that he ripped off some of the cannons on the various roofs in the process. A hiss escaped Eren's throat when he gauged the damage on his titan. His legs were completely pinned to the ground and some of the spears penetrated his belly and arms as well, but he knew those weren't strong enough to stop him for very long.

Luckily, his head and neck were completely free, so it meant he had some leverage to defend himself, although it was limited severely because of his non-existent mobility. *"This is very bad,"* Eren thought worriedly, sweat dripping from his face, *"If I had to deal with literally anybody else but Levi and Erwin, I would've been fine, but..."* He eyed Humanity's Strongest, who had joined Erwin on one of the roofs. He noticed that Petra was nowhere to be found. *'I almost feel*

overwhelmed. I had forgotten just how powerful those two are together."

Levi eyed Eren's titan form from his vantage point seemingly emotionlessly, but Erwin knew him well enough to know that he was both impressed and caught slightly off guard by Eren's incredibly fast reflexes. "He knew the trap," Levi stated to Erwin rather matter-of-factly, his face turning into a scowl. "Erwin, we've never used this method of catching a titan alive before, right?" he questioned sharply.

The specific way of how Levi formulated his sentence suggested it was a question for confirmation, but the way he spoke it-strong and calculated-implied that he noticed there was something off about how Eren reacted so perfectly to counter most of the damage of the spears. Erwin stayed silent, the gears in his head turning as he tried to think of a logical explanation. The only reason Eren could've predicted this trap was if somebody had told him in advance.

"Although that would mean there's a traitor in our midst," Erwin thought, looking at his fellow soldiers who had detonated the traps. He had handpicked them all for this dangerous mission and trusted each of them with his life. He couldn't fathom either of them siding with this revolutionist.

"Then again," Erwin continued to think deeply, *"this Eren Yeager is a special case. He's just a kid, yet he possesses an ability that allows him to turn into a titan; enemies we understand nothing about."* He idly watched how Eren tried to rip out some of the spears that were lodged deeply in his body, without much result. *"He reacted to our offensive the way you would expect from an opponent with years of experience and first-hand knowledge of our tactics, he uses his titan as an extension of his body like a seasoned sword master uses his blade, and he claims to know the secret of the titans. He even managed to convince Dot Pixis."* Erwin hummed, thinking of what his father told him about the possibility of life outside of the walls and what happened to him afterwards as a consequence. *"Could it be*

that this Eren Yeager is from outside the walls?" he wondered in silent disbelief.

The silence Levi got in return was answer enough that Erwin knew what he was thinking. "Either way," he continued, pointing one of his blades at Eren's restrained titan, "we will have our answers soon enough once I rip Eren Yeager out of his titan." He gave Erwin a sideways glance. "I sent Petra away for now to report on the status of Oluo, Gunter and Eld. They should probably have wrapped up things by now and be on their way back."

Erwin nodded his head. "Levi, I trust you can handle the rest of this?" He wasn't so sure Eren was completely out and down for the count. He looked way too calm not to have an ace up his sleeve. Still, Levi was a phenomenal soldier with a skill that surpassed every other soldier tenfold, if not even more. So, he did not doubt his second in command whatsoever when he gave a slight nod in return.

"I should be if those spears keep him in place long enough." Without another word, Levi shot two of his hooks into the building opposite of him before swinging down to throw himself at Eren with every intention to slice him up. His face hardened into a murderous expression as he brought back his blades to firstly cut off both of Eren's arms while he was descending unto him like a missile.

Eren hissed at Levi's sudden offense. He kept underestimating this Ackerman's speed. *"He's going for my arms to leave me completely defenseless."* Eren knew he couldn't do much about it; he was too immobilized to counter Levi in this situation. With a well-executed slash, Levi's blade pierced through Eren's left upper arm, slicing through his humerus bone and dislocating his shoulder joint, which now hung limply at Eren's side while boiling hot blood rushed out of the large gash he had inflicted.

With his momentum going downwards, Levi aimed one of his hooks towards the back of Eren's head to come back around and bring his blades back into Eren's other shoulder. In the span of a second, he stabbed both of his blades through Eren's rotator cuff and trapezius

muscles, ripping the tissues apart like a hot knife through butter. Immediately, Eren's right shoulder seized to cooperate and be nothing but a useless hump of flesh. Levi's blades were now completely blunt, but shooting up to the sky to gain more momentum gave him plenty of time to change them. Like a fallen angel who had burned off his wings by flying too closely to the sun, Levi started to drop down again as gravity took a hold of him. He had both of his blades drawn into an X pattern, ready to bring them down on Eren's neck diagonally to cut off his head in one clean blow and get him out of his titan.

However, Levi let out a big hiss in surprise when a completely hardened Eren looked back at him. *"He used the time I was busy butchering his arms to harden his whole body like a big statue."* Levi cursed under his breath, stopped his attack and shot down two hooks to halt his momentum completely so he landed gracefully on Eren's neck. He tapped his foot against the crystal-like structure experimentally and snorted a little bit, beckoning over some of Erwin's soldiers. *"However you look at it, he trapped himself. It's only a matter of time before we get him out of there."*

"Levi, sir! You needed our help?" One of the soldiers asked him loyally when they had landed next to Humanity's Strongest. Levi's serious face would've intimidated anybody, but there was no time to be afraid right now. They had already defeated the biggest threat in Eren Yeager's titan. It should be a victorious moment and the soldiers treated it as such.

"That's right," Levi stated with an affirmative nod. "I want you to aim to remaining spear cannons at Eren Yeager's neck. Let's see if we can actually get him out if this husk." Levi sat down idly, knowing that Eren didn't pose a threat anymore.

"Sir, yes sir!" the soldiers saluted before firing their vertical maneuvering equipment so they could fly off to get the cannons into position. Levi rubbed his chin, deep in thought. *"Something doesn't feel right here. After such a flawless reaction to our trap, why would Eren resort to such a desperate tactic? Is this part of his plan to stall*

us?" Levi watched the titan's lifeless eyes with a harrumph.
"Unless..."

Levi stood up to examine the titan once more. This time, he gave a hard kick against Eren's hardened neck instead of the experimental tap he had done before. Of course, it didn't do any damage, but the hollow thud that resonated all around Levi made him grit his teeth. *"Don't tell me..."* He jumped down to the ground below, only to see a small hole at the base of the titan's lower neck; big enough for Eren to have crawled out of. *' So, it was all a distraction,"* Levi realized with a jeer as he looked at the now empty shell of Eren's titan. *"He used the time I wasted commanding Erwin's soldiers to quietly exit his titan and escape."* Levi's expression darkened while he turned his head low. He knew he had too little gas to go looking for Eren without having a lead. All he could do was wait for Petra to return with the rest of the squad. Hopefully, they had managed to subdue Ymir.

Petra Ral found herself in a precarious situation. She felt unsure why Levi had sent her away to report on the status of her other squad members. She would've been lying if she didn't rather prefer to stay close to Levi. Even if Eren Yeager seemed to be trapped, she knew he was far from defeated. She wanted to support Levi as best as she could in this situation; not play as his scout. She had grunted in annoyance when she went to look out for Oluo, Gunther and Eld, not feeling comfortable in leaving Levi to deal with Eren on his own. Now though, her sour look had turned into complete horror and anxiety. Sweat dripped from her brow as she came to look at Ymir's titan and her fallen teammates.

" Gunther... Eld..." Her mind couldn't comprehend it. From where she was standing, they looked as dead as a corpse, so she assumed the worst. Seething anger started to build inside her body, an uncontrollable rage she wanted to unleash on the monster in front of her. Her fury had no boundaries as she started to scream in anger,

blades drawn which shone brightly under the sunlight. Petra started to run at Ymir head on, her eyes screaming bloody murder.

"Is she going to attack me?" Ymir thought incredulously. She had knocked out her teammates without too much trouble. Her claw had already regenerated enough for her to use it again. *"There's no way she will stand a chance against me. You're making it way too easy, Petra."* Ymir prepared herself like Eren had taught her to do. She changed her stance, flexing her claws menacingly and waiting for Petra to make the first move.

Just like she expected, Petra attacked in a blind rage. She used her vertical maneuvering equipment to propel herself forwards, heightening her speed considerably. Petra didn't really have a plan in mind. She was just going to cut open Ymir's nape and defeat her like she had done plenty of times with other titans in the past. Her experiences under Levi's command ensured she could dodge Ymir's sweeping claw easily. She swooped under it by shooting a hook into the ground below, and using the ensuing motion to aim her swords at Ymir's neck with a triumphant smirk on her face. *"That was way off,"* Petra thought victoriously, *"How did-"* Her thought died down rather abruptly in her mind when the wind was suddenly knocked out of her. Ymir, smartly enough, never had the intention to hit Petra in the first place, but rather, the cables of her vertical maneuvering equipment.

"Just like Eren told us to do," Ymir thought with a slight smile, her claw's sweeping motion ensuring the cable snapped. Petra's momentum was stopped instantly, the other cable throwing her off of her intended trajectory and cutting deeply in her side as she lost all control and crashed violently to the ground below. She hissed and grunted as she rolled to a halt, her whole body feeling bruised, but especially her side exploded in searing pain.

She looked at it in panic and saw how her clothes began to stain red with her blood. *"I'm bleeding! Quick, put pressure on it!"* Her mind screamed to her, her trembling hands doing exactly that while she cried out in pain. Petra tried to hold back her tears among her ragged breaths, with her clothes sticking to the relatively deep

wound like one layer while she hissed and cursed. *"I need to stop the bleeding or else I'll-"* her expression turned mortified as Ymir came back into her point of view threateningly. She knew she had no way to defend herself, lest she risk bleeding out much faster. Petra gasped and hiccuped, her body refusing to believe she was going to die like this as Ymir approached her slowly. *"Please, let this be over soon..."*

However, just as Petra thought Ymir was going to deal the finishing blow, a young, feminine voice spoke up. "Ymir..."

Ymir turned her attention to the owner of the voice, since she recognized it all too well. *"Mikasa?"* she thought in stupor. She could sense the panic and desperation in Mikasa's voice. Her eyes were filled with tears and she was trembling on her feet. "Please stop, Ymir," she begged, almost pathetically so. "Bertolt, he's..."

At that moment, Ymir realized something went *completely* wrong on Mikasa's end. *"No way... don't tell me it's that guy you shot out of the sky."* She froze as she feared the worst. Mikasa just nodded her head slowly, as if she understood what Ymir was thinking. "Oluo... He's holding me at gunpoint right now," she elaborated, almost in a whisper. "You need to back off, please..."

Ymir had never seen Mikasa so fragile before; the mighty Ackerman almost looked as if she was going to fall apart any second now. Ymir knew she was beaten. If she did anything stupid, both Mikasa and Bertolt would instantly bite the dust. She hung her head low and slammed her fist into the ground, creating a small crater as she did so. *"We failed..."* she thought disbelievingly, her breath turning erratic while she sombrely closed her eyes. *"After so much preparation. Was it all for nothing?"* Just as Ymir was about to give up hope, the impossible seemed to happen.

"Ymir, there's no need to back off."

She gasped audibly, as did Mikasa, as none other than Eren Yeager himself-their guardian angel-came into view, calmly walking into the

plaza. He had the recognizable red markings on his face that showed he had just exited his titan not too long ago. He let his eyes wander over the plaza, seemingly unimpressed with the ongoing situation. One could say he looked almost bored.

"Eren!" Mikasa hiccuped, uncharacteristically struggling to find her voice. "Please, you need to get out of here!"

It was exactly what Eren had expected she would say. He gave her a kind smile in return; one he knew that would send butterflies through her stomach as he took another step forward. "Mikasa. There's no need to worry. Oluo isn't going to shoot you, okay? At least, not anymore now that I'm here." His kind smile brightened just a tad. "Everything is going to be fine, all right?"

If it was anybody else telling her those words, she wouldn't have believed them. However, the calmness and confidence Eren radiated from every word that escaped from his lips gripped her very core. "*Eren...*" she thought to herself, her panic melting away into pure warmth for the boy who she had crushed on so hopelessly ever since he wrapped that scarf around her neck-that same scarf she wore right now and tickled her face. "*I know... how can I ever doubt you, Eren?*" The joyful tears that appeared in the corner of her eyes said enough. She didn't need to say anything to convey her message.

"*Mikasa, thank you for believing in me,*" Eren thought appreciatively, his smile never wavering. He gave her a nod, before focusing his attention on where he knew Oluo was holding Mikasa at gunpoint. From this distance, it was pretty hard to spot Oluo in the tower Bertolt and Mikasa had taken refuge in. Eren knew the streets like the back of his hand, though, and thus had the advantage of noticing him very quickly. He focused on Oluo, his voice loud and clear enough that it echoed over the plaza so he could hear him.

"Oluo, it looks like we are at an impasse here. I have Gunther and Eld, while you have Bertolt and Mikasa. It may look like Ymir killed them, but they're both fine, I assure you. However, Petra is in serious

need of medical attention. If you don't do something quickly, she might bleed to death. I propose a fair trade: your soldiers for my family."

When Oluo refused to respond, Eren tried again. "Oluo, listen. Dot Pixis is taking the Garrison to the palace of the puppet king as we speak. The Military Police Brigade fled, Levi is out of gas and can't get here in time to provide backup and Erwin's trap failed. I don't want any more unnecessary bloodshed. Let's put an end to this peacefully," he suggested.

A heavy silence followed, one so thick it was almost suffocating, but at last, Oluo responded. "Eren Yeager!" he yelled back, making Eren narrow his eyes challengingly. Another pause, before Oluo continued, his voice pained, but also filled with respect. "Well played."

Silence is often considered blissful, however, when you want to scream out for help and no sound comes out of your mouth, it quickly turns maddening. There was nothing but darkness, like an unending void that stretched out forever. *"Where am I!? What happened!? Somebody please help me!"*

The moment you think you're going insane-your cries for help unanswered-people often experience a moment of serenity. It seemed that was exactly the case. Suddenly, the darkness disappeared. A young girl was standing there, all alone. Her black hair obscured her face, but it was obvious her expression was a kind-hearted one.

"Where am I?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders, not unkindly. "Who knows?" she responded. "The beginning? The end? The Tree of Yggdrasil is a vast place, connecting everything together. As the Root, there's no saying where we are, the possibilities are endless."

"What am I doing here?"

"You died," the girl replied bluntly. "Every Eldian who dies comes to this place. You are part of the Tree, so it was inevitable."

"I don't understand."

"You don't have to," the girl reassured kindly. "Comprehending anything here is beyond reason." She beckoned her hand gently, indicating to follow. "Come."

She walked away, her expression suddenly solemn, even though her hair still blocked her face. "Tell me," she whispered, "Eldians... why do they exist, you think?"

"..."

"You don't know either, huh?" the girl responded, her sigh filled with exhaustion. "Are we here just to suffer? To be punished? To be beaten? To be humiliated? To repeat our mistakes over and over again in an endless loop? It seems that way," the girl admitted, "as if we've been cursed from the very beginning."

"..."

The silence seemed to sadden the girl. "Why don't you speak up? Why don't you rage? Don't you think it's unfair?"

"..."

The girl turned her head low, like she was about to give up. She looked broken, beaten and defeated. She stared at the ground lifelessly, the spark of hope she had hold on for so long slowly fading like the flame in a dying candle.

"No."

A gasp escaped the girl's throat, her eyes turning to saucers as she looked back. "No?" she questioned in a whisper, not believing her

ears. "Are you saying we deserved all of this?"

"No."

"Then what is it?" she demanded somewhat angrily, her fists balling.

"We certainly didn't deserve it. However, the reality is that it happened. We can cry and weep about it and change nothing... or we can stand up and fight. Over and over again. No matter how many times we get knocked down, we'll get back up again as many times as is needed. Life doesn't exist for Eldians to suffer. It exists to prosper, to learn and to love. Eldians deserve this as much as anybody else does. So... stand up and *fight*. With every fiber of your being! Never give up hope!"

The girl's breathing got erratic at the answer, making thick tears of joy roll past her cheeks as she giggled in relief. "I-I thought I lost you," she admitted, "I'm so glad you're far stronger than I am. Thank you!" she wiped away her tears, her body language eager and appreciative. "You have to go back," she said. "Your time is not up yet. Let the Tree of Yggdrasil guide you to your destination and take my blessing with you. The path of-"

Dina awoke with a jolt, her scream loud while her whole body was covered in a cold sweat. Her hands shivered uncontrollably while she looked around warily. "*What...*" she thought, her breath uneven. Her heart was beating a mile a minute and she had the huge urge to cry. "*Where...*"

"Dina!" a familiar voice shouted. The door was abruptly swung open as Grisha stormed inside, his worry palpable on his face as he looked her up and down. "Dina," he repeated slowly, his voice almost choking.

"Gr-Gris..." Dina coughed, a splitting headache wracking her mind and making her nauseous. She felt like she was about to pass out then and there.

"Easy there, Dina, I'm here," Grisha said reassuringly. "Everything is going to be fine." He sat down at the edge of the bed and grabbed her hand, holding it gently.

Dina cracked a small smile at him, her body calming down somewhat. He always had that effect on her. "What happened?" she whispered.

Grisha looked unsure, as if he was contemplating if he should tell her the truth or not. When Dina gave him a gentle nod, silently telling him it was okay, Grisha cleared his throat. "You were shot in the head by a soldier of the Military Police Brigade. The bullet destroyed your brain, but somehow, you were able to transfer your consciousness through your body. Ever since then, you have been in a coma."

Dina widened her eyes. "How long?" she demanded impatiently.

"Two weeks, give or take," Grisha answered. "We succeeded in overthrowing the faulty government. We're now officially a diarchy with Frieda and Historia Reiss leading us, although the latter is still very weak. I had to perform surgery on her in the open field, and by some unbelievable miracle, she survived." Grisha still couldn't believe he succeeded, but it was as if an unseen force was guiding his hands. He had patched her up relatively quickly and gave her the precious hours she needed to get her admitted to the hospital where she received proper care.

"Anyway," he continued, "both Annie and Reiner are in very bad shape, but healing quickly. Bertolt suffered minor injuries while both Ymir and Mikasa are doing fine," Grisha informed her.

"What about Eren?" Dina asked immediately.

Grisha stayed silent as Eren calmly walked in the room. He removed the hood he was wearing and gave his stepmother a warm smile. "Welcome back," he said. He kneeled at her bed and wrapped his arms around her lovingly, giving her a warm hug. "I'm so glad you

are okay," he whispered to her, to which Dina reciprocated the hug, cooing like how Carla would often do.

"Eren, we did it, didn't we?" Dina said, her voice hinting how proud she was. She couldn't believe her stepson's plan had worked out. After so much turmoil and setbacks for both teams, they were finally one step closer to saving the Eldians and giving them *true* freedom.

Eren broke the hug, his grin wide and contagious. "Yes, we did. We can now work on the next step of getting Paradis Island titan-free and prepare for the arrival of the Beast and Cart Titans. However, first, we will take a well-deserved rest. The people behind the walls need time to adjust as well."

Dina nodded her head in agreement. After all, a lot of things were going to change. Grisha smiled at the scene of his first wife and son chatting so amiably. He couldn't be prouder at the moment. "I'll give you guys some time alone." He walked out of the room and closed the door behind him.

Eren stayed at Dina's side for a little while longer, making idle conversations and keeping her company until he saw she was getting tired again. "You need to rest. I can't believe you pulled a Reiner on us, but I'm glad it worked out and that you're recovering well."

An owlish look crossed on Dina's face, but she didn't comment on it. *"Probably something that happened with Reiner while I was out,"* she mused. Instead, she closed her eyes and rested her head back on her pillow.

Seeing this as his cue to leave, Eren stood up from the bed and walked to the door. Just when he grabbed the handle, however, he heard Dina's voice once more.

"The path of Truth lies beyond the Intertwined Rope. Make the Jump and reach The Gate."

Eren's expression sharpened into one of determination. Without looking back, he opened the door.

"I know, and I will."

So that wraps up this arc of the story, finally! This turned out to be a bit bigger than originally expected, but that is fine. :) Anyway, did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Please review! Reviews make my day! :D Until next time!

~Syrup

Recruiting the squad

Next chapter is here, folks! Apologies again for the delay, but I'm afraid updates will continue to be slow. I have a lot of things to deal with IRL at the moment, so I hope you guys can understand. In any case, this chapter was beta-read again by my good friend ARCEUS-master. He'll be my beta-reader for the remainder of the story as well. Muchos gracias, mi amigo; lo aprecio! :3

Enjoy the chapter!

~Shiranai Atsune: Yey! A new update! (...) I can't wait to read more!

Thanks for the kind words. :)

~Guest: Syrup-Waffle: I am inevitable.

You could not live without another chapter. Where did that bring you? Back to me. ;)

~Guest: Well worth the wait and a very satisfying conclusion to this arc. Great story.

Thank you! I'm glad you enjoyed it! :D

~Guest: I can't wait to see Zeke reaction when he comes to paradise island. (...)

It's going to have a twist for sure. You'll find out at the end of this arc.

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

Just outside of Trost District, on a gloomy afternoon, a brown-haired teenager was silently grumbling to himself. He couldn't be any older than fourteen years old. His posture was somewhat lanky as he carried back home the wood that he'd just gathered. Sweat was pouring copiously down his back and forehead while his sore muscles were screaming out at him to rest for a bit. Letting out a deep sigh, he complied. He let the wood slid off from his back-which he had neatly tied together with some rope-and buried his axe into the ground next to him.

Sitting back against a tree just outside of wall Rose, he looked up at the sky. The dark grey clouds that had forebodingly gathered together only meant it was going to rain soon. "*There's no way the wood won't get wet now,*" he thought sourly. He knew he couldn't do anything about it, but it was still annoying. His mother needed the wood to turn on the stove to be able to cook, as well as ignite the fireplace that would provide a lot of warmth for the night. When the wood was wet, that was going to be almost impossible to accomplish. After all, at this time of the year, the winds were unforgiving, especially when your home wasn't isolated properly.

Ever since Frieda and Historia Reiss took over two years ago, a lot of things had changed. For one, the military had been completely reformed so most forms of corruption had completely wilted away. Another major change was the fact every adult male could vote now. The newly formed parliament was made up of different parties as opposed to only the royalty. These parties represented the people of Paradis and made sure Frieda's and Historia's power weren't absolute.

This new form of governance resulted in a lot of transparency, economic welfare and technological advancements. Still, even if a lot of people were reaping the fruits of these changes, the distinct gap between the rich and the poor continued to exist. Unfortunately for Jean Kirstein, he belonged in the latter category.

A scowl formed on his features when he felt the first cool raindrops of the day hit his face. The wind picked up in speed and soon, a rich downpour was wetting the earth below. "*I'll have to move again soon, or else I'll catch a cold,*" he thought to himself. Just as he stood up and gathered his belongings, he heard a small group of horses galloping in the distance, approaching him relatively quickly.

Looking up, Jean noticed they were military, but he couldn't quite make out if they were from the Survey Corps or the Garrison. "*They're probably from the Garrison, but what are they even doing all the way out here?*" he wondered idly. Not thinking about it any further, he patiently waited for the group to pass him so he could continue on his journey back home.

However, instead of speeding up, the small military squad started to slow down. From this distance, Jean could see their green capes billow with the wind in an awe-inspiring manner. Thousands of raindrops bounced off of their equipment while the horses neighed because of how treacherous and muddy the road had become. Jean perked a brow as he realized they were actually from the Survey Corps. He'd always admired their bravery, but found their goal incredibly pointless and wasteful. He couldn't fathom how they'd ever win against these giant, man-eating monsters and gain any ground for humanity.

However, things had changed. New weapons had been invented in a very short period of time to deal with the titans outside the walls. If Jean had to believe the newspapers, Paradis would be proclaimed titan-free in about a year. Shaking his head to get rid of these thoughts, he brought his full attention towards the captain of the group, who'd cloaked his face rather brilliantly.

He assumed they were slowing down because of the weather, or if they did completely stop, simply to ask him for directions because he was a local. So, when they actually did, he bowed respectfully and waited for them to speak up first.

"Oi," the captain said in a deep and imposing tone, not revealing his face yet, "you wouldn't happen to be from Trost District, would you?"

Jean was quick to respond, though he did notice he found the captain's voice funny, as if he was a lot younger than he acted. "I am, sir," he revealed.

"That's good." The captain nodded in approval. "You're Jean Kirstein, right?"

As if the howling of the wind and their imposing appearances weren't making these warriors intimidating enough already, then surely the fact that this captain knew his name brought a whole new layer of fear inside Jean's body. A visible shiver traveled through his spine as he nodded his head up and down, too frightened to speak up or ask how he'd possibly know that.

The faintest of grins edged on the captain's face as he dismounted his trusty steed, his boots splashing muddy water everywhere as he landed on the soggy ground. Now that Jean looked at him, he was actually taller in comparison. The captain brought his hands to his hoodie and slowly pulled it back, revealing a face every inhabitant of Paradis knew by heart.

"N-no way!" Jean stuttered. "You're Eren Yeager!"

Eren smiled as he nodded his head. "I am. I've been waiting for this day for a long time now, Jean. I need you back at my side, so I have an offer for you that you can't refuse."

Utter confusion ran through Jean's head; not only because Eren was talking to him like they'd known each other for years, but also because *Eren Yeager* of all people approached *him*. "I don't understand," he babbled quickly. "I'm just a simple peasant. How can I be of any importance to you?"

A knowing glint appeared in Eren's eyes; something he was notorious for. "You will see in due time. For now, I need to know, are

you interested in serving her majesties and the Survey Corps under the leadership of Levi Ackerman, Hange Zoë and Erwin Smith?" he asked in an unwavering tone.

If there's something that Jean had always wanted, then it was to escape his mundane life and see more of the world. Especially if he could mean something for humanity in the long run and make a name for himself. "Yes, I am, Mr. Yeager, sir!"

The amount of respect he gave him made Eren chuckle for some reason. Jean just dismissed it as his eagerness to serve and didn't make any comment on it. Instead, he took Eren's outstretched hand and shook it vigorously. "It's settled then. The training will be rigorous, but I've got a feeling you'll pass it without a hitch. Call it a gut feeling," Eren said mysteriously, his kind smile never wavering.

He patted his horse before mounting it again, giving Jean a salute that was usually reserved for high ranking officers, before he continued to be on his way.

Jean watched them go with a stunned expression on his face, not believing that he just got enrolled in the army, and in the Survey Corps no less, one of the most prestigious jobs he could get. Still, there was only thing on Jean's mind as he looked at the Survey Corps disappearing over the rainy horizon. *"Did he... did he just wink at me when he was patting his horse!?"*

The downpour from earlier had dwindled down into a light drizzle. It was the kind that gave a wonderful smell of freshness to nature that the brown-haired girl liked so much. She was currently hiding in some tall bushes, her hair tied into a neat ponytail while her bow and arrow were cocked. *"Steady... steady..."* she told herself, easing her breathing and closing one eye to aim properly.

The current weather conditions were perfect for a good round of hunting. The rain ensured her scent was perfectly masked even if the wind was at her back, meaning the unfortunate doe further up

ahead couldn't possibly smell her. It also gave her an extreme boost in her accuracy; whatever happened, her family was going to eat well tonight.

The girl held her breath for a few seconds and then released the string on her bow, firing off the arrow with lethal intent. It zipped through the air, the wind further boosting its velocity until it reached its target. The doe had no time to react before the arrow pierced her side. A feral screech rang through the air as the doe began to bleed. In a wild panic, she sprinted off, leaving an obvious crimson trail behind as she disappeared into some nearby foliage.

Sasha Blouse smiled brightly at her shot. *"Direct hit! You still got it in you , girl,"* she praised herself as she hung her bow on her back. Standing up to her full height, she walked to the spot where she hit the doe. From the amount of blood that she was losing, it was obvious to Sasha the doe wasn't going to hold out for long.

She followed the trail silently for about a minute until she found the doe's final resting place. She had bled out rather quickly, and from the clean shot, Sasha deduced the arrow she had used hadn't gone to waste. *"Perfect, now let's get you all ready,"* she thought while grabbing her pocket knife and holding it between her teeth. She needed to prepare this doe first before she could take it with her back home, otherwise it would be way too heavy.

Like a skilled butcher, she began to cut open the doe, starting from her throat all the way to her underside. She was careful and worked meticulously to remove the doe's internal organs without cutting too deeply into it, otherwise most of the meat would get infected with stomach fluids or other substances that would make it inedible.

While she was working so intensely on her kill, she noticed someone else had joined her from afar. Her sharp ears had picked up on the sound of footsteps almost immediately. She hummed as she closed her eyes, not stopping what she was doing as she spoke up. "If you don't want an arrow between your eyes, I suggest you either reveal who you are, or leave back the way you came from," she threatened,

with the steadfast tone in her voice making it perfectly clear she wasn't joking.

Her distinct, southern drawl echoed throughout the woods with authority unexpectedly coming from a fourteen-year-old girl, but Sasha Blouse was well experienced with people who came from outside of her village to hunt game around these parts. Especially if said game was already shot and ready for the taking.

"I'm an ally," the voice revealed, sounding slightly surprised. Sasha assumed because she'd found him out so quickly. That, or he was surprised she didn't show any fear whatsoever. Either way, from his voice she could deduce he was a teenager around her age. It was why she didn't raise her guard and idly continued cleaning her doe.

"You're not from Dauper, are you?" she said in a somewhat accusatory tone, clearly knowing the answer already, but just looking for confirmation.

"I am not," the voice replied neutrally.

"Then I'm not interested in whatever it is you are after. Leave," Sasha commanded bluntly. Frankly, she was tired of people coming from all over the place and hunting the game that was supposed to be for *her* village. Dauper had always been a self-sustaining town where everybody knew each other. She was never really fond of outsiders who-in her mind-tried to throw dirt on its name.

"What if I'm actually after furthering Paradis' future and, by extension, Dauper's future in turn?" the voice questioned smoothly.

For the first time, Sasha halted. She closed her eyes while cleaning her knife and pocketing it again so she could turn around. "Who are you?" she asked in the general direction of the voice. She'd be lying if it didn't interest her a bit. Ever since the coupe d'état two years ago, Dauper had benefited a lot from the changes it had brought along with it. She couldn't really deny the fact of the added prosperity she'd been experiencing along with her family.

Everything stayed silent for a while, until the voice revealed himself by stepping forward and into her line of sight. Sasha's jaw dropped the moment she recognized him. Her heart sped up, her breathing quickened and she clasped her cheeks with her hands, her hunter instincts completely melting away as she was face to face with the young man who started the coup *himself* . "This isn't happening!" she squeaked, giggling madly before regaining herself a bit. "Eren Yeager!"

Eren had to control his laughter as he nodded his head. Sasha felt a little lightheaded and had the huge urge to run up and to give him a hug. Miraculously, she did not, and opted just to hop up and down in place. "You're like my biggest idol!" she said happily. "I can't believe I'd ever meet you!"

She wanted to say more, but then realized how she reacted to him before and felt immediate embarrassment overtake her. She bowed down quickly, her cheeks reddening noticeably in the process as she apologized to him profusely. "Please forgive me for earlier, that whole putting an arrow through your forehead and the rudeness. I seriously had no idea I was talking to you."

Eren waved it off. "It's quite all right. The reason why I'm here is because of you anyway, Sasha Blouse."

This revelation had the hot blush on her cheeks intensify considerably, this time for a completely different reason, never mind the fact he knew her name. "M-me?" she reiterated cutely with a soft stutter.

"Yes," Eren responded honestly. "I need you on my team at the Survey Corps. Your sharp wit and excellent sharpshooter skills will be very beneficial to me."

Sasha was ecstatic. She couldn't believe Eren Yeager wanted her on *his* personal team. Even though she noticed he wasn't telling her everything, there was no doubt in her mind that he had good

intentions. "I'd love to join your team at the Survey Corps!" she responded resolutely. "So long as there's good food!"

Eren's mirth rang through the cold air at her response, his laughter contagious as Sasha giggled with him in tandem. After a while, it died down into controlled chuckles, a bittersweet smile coming on his face. With a fond and almost apologetic look in his eyes, he whispered, "I've missed you so much..." more to himself than to her. Sasha still heard him, though, but didn't comment on it. Eren almost sounded nostalgic, like he was going to burst into tears at any moment. But as soon as it came, it was gone again. "Perfect!" he said quickly afterwards, perfectly hiding his earlier sentiments. "Then it's settled. Now then." He nudged her gently and pointed at her doe.

"Shall I help you finish cleaning that?"

Evening had fallen on Paradis island, which made the temperature drop even further. Most people had found the warmth of their homes and had their fireplaces lit by now. A young teenager with brown, shaved hair was humming a happy tune to himself, idly doing the dishes for his sick mother. His younger brother was practicing his reading and writing with his father in the basement below, while his little sister was currently clawing at his legs like a bored feline.

"Big bro," she whined in a puppy voice, "are we going to play soon?"

He laughed at her impatience. She'd been repeatedly asking him that for the last five minutes. "Sunny," he responded playfully, giving her a gentle pat on her head, "I'm almost done with these chores. Afterwards, we can play all evening if you want."

"But that still takes too long!" She pouted and crossed her arms cutely. The little she-devil knew her brother had a soft spot for her adorable behaviour. "You can finish them later!" she suggested quickly, like she'd found a big revelation, tugging at one of his arms.

He muttered something under his breath along the lines of why he was so weak, before giving in reluctantly. His father would probably kill him for not finishing the chores he'd given him, but he couldn't possibly deny his sister. "All right then, Sunny." He sighed dramatically and pretended to be annoyed with her, which only elicited joyful giggles as she dragged him out of the kitchen and into the living room.

When he saw the old, worn, wooden toys her sister had already neatly placed on the ground, Connie Springer knew already what time it was. "Oh *no!*" he wailed out theatrically, "anything but this, Sunny, *please!*"

Sunny burst out in a fit of giggles again, knowing fully well her big brother was joking. She ushered for him to sit down between the toys, while she sat opposite of him with much excitement in her twinkling, brown eyes. She grabbed the toy that resembled an equine *somewhat* and started to make galloping sounds, moving it closer to Connie by making it jump up and down.

Connie instinctively grabbed the knight that he knew was supposed to be the bad guy before sliding it in front of Sunny's equine toy, blocking her path. "Stop! Fiend!" he bellowed exaggeratedly, moving the knight a little as if the toy was speaking. "Who *dares* to cross me, the Black Brute?"

Sunny tried to contain her giggles as she responded in an elegant tone. "It's me, the queen of the Greenlands. I was just going home for my daily tea!" Her voice cracked cutely as she tried to pitch it in a higher tone than what it already was.

"Hah!" Connie thundered back, making Sunny shriek in joy, "a talking horse can't be the queen of the Greenlands! I ought to slay you for assuming that I am a fool! But I still need a trusty steed to carry my tired legs through these lands, so it works out!"

"Nooooo!" Sunny cried out joyfully when her brother launched himself on her and started to tickle her sides, her shrieks of laughter echoing

through the home. "Yes, you will do nicely, your tickle muscles still work!" Connie continued on in his deep, villainous voice, laughing alongside her.

The duo was interrupted by a gentle knocking on the door. Normally, this wouldn't raise any alarm, since Ragako village was very small. It could've easily been one of the neighbours asking for something. However, the cackling sound emitted by the burning of multiple torches made Connie react very cautiously. "Sunny, stay here," he whispered to her seriously.

The knocking came again in that same, gentle tone. Connie decided to test the waters. "Who's there?" he asked. A pause, before a young, masculine voice responded, not unkindly.

"Survey Corps. No need to be afraid. I'm looking for Connie Springer. Do you know where I can find him, perhaps?" The voice suggested he had no idea he was speaking to Connie Springer right now, but Connie saw through that easily. Something in that voice was relieved and excited the moment he'd heard him speak. Cleverly so, Connie played it dumb.

"There's no Connie Springer living here. I believe you've got the wrong home," he replied very convincingly. He gave a sideways glance to his little sister, who had hidden herself partly behind a table, her head peeking out of her hiding spot occasionally to look if Connie was still doing all right.

There was a larger pause from outside, before the voice responded very kindly. "Does it help if I told you that I'm Eren Yeager, Connie?" The fact that whoever was at the other side of the door didn't bother hiding anymore that he knew he was at the right location made Connie's muscles tense up a little bit, never mind that he claimed to be none other than Eren Yeager himself.

"If you really are Eren Yeager, what business do you have that you're in Ragako village at this hour?" he asked, not convinced yet whatsoever.

"I'm putting together the old team," the voice replied honestly, "and that means it was inevitable I was going to end up at your door someday. I need you, Connie."

A weird sense of déjà vu seemed to hit Connie. The voice was talking complete nonsense, yet for some reason, it seemed awkwardly credible. "What are you talking about?" he replied anyway, his voice getting shaky.

"I think you know what I'm talking about. The others have felt it too, whether consciously or unconsciously. It's no coincidence I've been able to recruit everybody so far. I need you on my team in the Survey Corps to prepare for the freeing of the Eldians outside of Paradis Island."

It was a completely ludicrous prospect in Connie's mind, but for some reason, he still opened the door to see Eren Yeager standing in front of him, complete in his Survey Corps attire. He wanted to react shocked, but instead, he steeled himself and gave Eren a solid nod. "I'm in," he said resolutely.

"I'm glad," Eren responded with a warm smile. "I assume your family is doing well?" he looked past Connie to see Sunny staring at him with big, interested eyes, still hiding but not really putting much effort into it anymore.

"Mom's been sick, but she's steadily recovering," Connie replied, like he was talking to a long-time friend. Which, unbeknownst to him, he actually was. It felt so natural that it was almost nauseating. Eren seemed satisfied, his warm breaths making little clouds of air appear against the cold wind.

"Tell her I said hi." With that, Eren turned around with his torch in hand to illuminate his path back through Ragako village, while his small group of Survey Corps members followed his lead. "Oh, and Connie?" Eren yelled back.

"Yes, Eren?" Connie replied automatically.

"Take good care of her. It's great to see you again."

He watched them silently mount their horses until they drove off in the cold night. Only when Connie closed the door again, he realized how *odd* that experience just was. "*Still,*" he mused as he gave his little sister a warm hug. "*I don't think anything would've changed the outcome.*"

That night, Connie dreamed of people he'd never seen before, yet were so familiar to him at the same time that he could swear he had spent a lifetime with them. Frankly, he hadn't slept so well in ages.

As a handpicked second in command by Eren Yeager himself, Hange Zoë was more than ecstatic to learn everything about the titans and the powers that surrounded them. Like she had expected, Eren hadn't disappointed her even in the slightest. For two years, not only had he taught her everything he knew about these man-eating monsters, but he also used her great intellect to their advantage in designing new weapons.

She'd upgraded the vertical maneuvering equipment so it was more durable and reliable, invented the Thunder Spears-like she would in the future, just sooner-and made prototypes of rapid-fire guns with the help of Grisha, Annie, Reiner and Bertolt. Paradis Island was going through an accelerated and forced industrial revolution to make up for the technology disadvantage they have over all the surrounding nations.

Hange knew the reason why Eren wanted to move so quickly; Marley was at war right now with the other nations. They could ill afford to defend themselves if they got attacked by Paradis as well. The incredible amount of valuable resources on the island meant that they had a unique trading position with the other nations as potential allies. The only tricky part was preparing everything and making sure the Eldians in Marley weren't going to pay the price because of it.

That's why Hange was waiting for Eren at the moment in one of the meeting rooms of the Military Police Brigade, deep inside Wall Sina.

Next to her, a young man with bowl-cut blonde hair was nervously squirming in place, slowly fiddling his index fingers. He couldn't be older than Eren, and a bead of sweat rolled down his cheek as he eyed Hange from the corner of his eyes. She gave him a kind smile. "Why are you so nervous, Armin? It's not like we're meeting with Levi or anything... or worse, could be with Erwin!" Hange spoke a little loudly. "It's just Eren!"

Armin released the breath he was holding. "It's not that, but the assignment Eren has for us. He's so... *different* than from before. Even after two years I'm still not quite used to it," he admitted with an awkward laugh. "His boisterousness knew no bounds and his fuse was short. He lost all of that completely."

Hange understood where Armin was coming from. "You're afraid the trust he has in you is misplaced."

Armin nodded his head solemnly. "I'm just fourteen. What if I'm not cut out for the task? I have no military experience, nor am I a titan shifter. What justifiable reason does Eren have to take me aboard this mission and help him further Paradis' goals other than that I'm his childhood friend?"

For a moment, everything stayed silent, until Hange started to laugh rambunctiously. Armin flinched at her sudden outburst of mirth while she slapped her knee like she'd heard the funniest joke.

"Eh?" Armin squeaked in an effeminate voice, not comprehending what was going on.

"Oh, Armin, you're very funny!" Hange bellowed and gave Armin a pat on the back rather roughly, causing the young teen to squeak haplessly. He would've lied if he said it didn't sting for a moment. "Eren is the most calculated person I have ever met. Do you think he shared his entire story with you without a reason?"

"N-no, I mean..." Armin stuttered before he was cut off.

"Of course Eren has a good reason to give you this important task!" Hange now scolded him, making him shrink in his seat. "Don't doubt yourself! You're a very clever boy."

"I-thank you?" he replied. Honestly, he couldn't get height of the woman next to him whatsoever. One thing was for sure, though. Hange always had his best interest at heart when it came to his mental well-being, and he could appreciate that a lot. She was one of the most trustworthy people he knew.

Their conversation came to an abrupt halt when the door to the meeting room was opened and no one other than Eren Yeager stepped inside. He gave both Hange and Armin an official salute before sitting down. "I'm sorry for being so late. This week was kind of hectic for me. There was a rumor of a breach in wall Maria, so I had to check up on it and make sure there weren't any titans roaming around. I also had to prepare for this meeting, because it's a very important one," he explained.

Hange kept her more overzealous behaviour in check after seeing Eren start the conversation off so seriously and instead opted for her more military and professional one. "I assume all the preparations are met then?"

Eren nodded his head. "I've started to recruit my elite team of warriors which will be trained under Levi's command alongside Oluo, Eld and Petra. It'll be a grueling two years of preparation to make them battle ready."

"So, where do we come in, then?" Armin questioned curiously.

A smile crossed on Eren's face; he didn't have to be a genius to figure out how uncertain his best friend was. "Well, my trainees don't only need physical training, but educational and tactical training as well. As the lead scientist of this island, Hange will teach them all about technology and using the latest weapons in combat efficiently,

while *you*, Armin, will teach them about battle formations, strategies and the titan's weak points."

Immediately, Armin turned as white as snow and balked. "M-me!?" he stuttered. "What can I possibly teach them what you couldn't? I have no experience!"

"You are right," Eren admitted, "that's why you'll be training alongside the team as well. If you don't have experience, then you'll gain it."

If the situation was less formal, Hange would've snorted at the appalled face Armin was making. He looked ready to faint then and there. As it stood, she actually pitied him a lot. Eren really put him in the spotlights, and it seemed Armin was far from ready for it.

"However," Eren continued, "I know how imposing of an important task this is. That's why you'll be doing an internship under the direct tutelage of Erwin Smith for the first six months. Afterwards, he'll be shifting more in the shadows and let you do the work instead. He'll help you every step of the way."

This seemed to calm down Armin significantly. He actually gave a half-hearted smile at how cleverly Eren had set this entire thing up. After a short silence, he nodded his head. "I think I can do that."

"Great, I have no doubt in my mind you will succeed, Armin!" He turned his attention back to Hange. "Will it be clear what you have to do as well? Obviously, field training is something I'd like you to be part of too."

"No problem, Eren! Then I can *finally* show off all my inventions and start to use them for real!" Hange said excitedly.

"Good," Eren responded, "that's one reason I requested to see you two. The other reason is the *third* part of the training I have in mind for our brand-new trainees." The way how he emphasized the word 'third' almost sounded mischievous. He tapped his fingers on the table smoothly as he continued.

"You see, there's another reason why I chose these particular three people on my team other than knowing their capabilities as extremely good soldiers, once they properly develop their skills, that is."

When Eren didn't immediately go on-leaving them both in suspense-Hange couldn't help but blurt out her thoughts. "Well! Tell us then!"

Armin too was thinking of what other reasons Eren could have that he would recruit these three, but when he couldn't think of anything, he just gave him a questioning stare.

"My father," Eren then finally said, "has been working very hard these last two years to recreate the anti-titan serum he invented. It requires an active part of a medicine that's not found on Paradis island, which he used the first time around. He's not there yet, but closing in. Meanwhile, however, I still have *three* very shiny titan powers sitting on my shelf, just waiting to be used."

Immediately, both Armin and Hange knew what Eren was implying. Their eyes turned to saucers as Eren explained further. "The third part of their training will be done by Annie, Reiner, Bertolt, Ymir and Dina. The former three have a lot of experience wielding the power of the titans, while the latter two can show them the ropes of actually controlling them. We'll be having six people with titan powers, myself included, going up against Marley's three. We'll have a near decisive numerical advantage."

It seemed like Eren's intuition was limitless. He was preparing a ruthless and lightning fast assault on Marley, there was no way they'd ever expect it.

" So, *this...* " Hange thought to herself, very impressed and at a loss for words for the moment, *"is the true powers of the titans."*

That's all for now, people! New arc has started! Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Please leave a review! Also, yes, Jean,

Connie and Sasha will each get a titan. We have Grisha's attack titan, Reiner's armored titan and Bertolt's colossal titan. Leave a comment as to who you think will get which titan and why. I'd love to read your opinion on it!

Next chapter will be a more light hearted one, mainly focusing on Eren's and Mikasa's growing relationship. I'll wish everybody a very merry Christmas and a happy new year! :D Enjoy the holidays and I will see you guys in 2020! Until then! ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Training the team

Hi, guys! I know, I know, I'm terribly late with this chapter, but I finally found the motivation again to write. Being consistent is one of the hardest things to do as a writer. Still, I don't want to make you guys wait four months for one chapter every time. That is why I'm going to do my best to update this story bi-weekly from now on! Anyway, I hope you guys enjoy the chapter! This one was beta-read once more by my good friend ARCEUS-master! Thanks a lot for that, my friend! I appreciate it :3 On with the story!

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

Eren's rigorous training schedule was actually a lot harder than Jean, Connie and Sasha had anticipated when they accepted his proposition. Even when Eren had revealed that each of them would be wielding one of the nine famed titan powers; he didn't cut them any slack at all. The days started around six in the morning and went all the way until eight in the evening.

Six months into their training, Eren finally saw the progress he was looking for and deemed his elite squad to be ready enough to start training with their respective titan powers. Just like with Dina, the power of the titans embodied themselves differently through each person. As such, Jean's, Connie's, and Sasha's titans each had unique traits that set them aside from other wielders that Eren knew of.

Connie's armored titan, for example, was twice as heavily coated in thick plates as Reiner's titan used to be. These plates were smooth, black and glossy like onyx, boosting the titan's defensive capabilities

so much that even Thunder Spears weren't able to penetrate it in a single blow. They merely dented and cracked the armor somewhat.

However, this also came with the downside that Connie's titan was very heavy. He basically traded all his speed for defense. As such, his attacks were devastating when they hit, but he was very slow in the process.

Sasha's attack titan, however, was the complete opposite. She wasn't as bulky as Grisha's attack titan nor as strong as Eren's attack titan, but she was very quick and agile. Moreover, her attack titan was best utilized from a distance rather than up-close. She quickly discovered that she couldn't harden herself like Eren could, but her hunter's acute instincts did allow her to create a crossbow with arrows that were powerful enough to go even through Connie's powerful armor.

At close range, however, she was rather defenseless. A single blow from Eren's or Dina's titan was enough to severely cripple her. It's why she used her speed and agility to keep distance from her opponent at all times.

Lastly, there was Jean with his colossal titan. Surprisingly, he wasn't sixty meters tall, but rather only forty. It quickly became abundantly clear why that was. Unlike Bertolt, his titan wasn't nearly as lanky. It was rather bulky, even. To make sure he could move properly inside his titan and not have instability in all of his joints, he noticeably had to sacrifice some height in the progress.

This wasn't even the most unique feature about Jean's titan, though. Instead of steam rising out of all his pores like with Bertolt's colossal titan, an unforgiving gale of icy wind blew out of them instead, creating a relentless blizzard wherever he went. It was a devastating titan to look at, which mercilessly froze solid everything that came too close to him.

That very same feature, however, was ultimately his Achilles heel as well. The severe freezing temperatures numbed Jean's body inside

his titan over time, eventually making him unable to control his titan anymore, after which he was forced to eject himself. As such, he could only control his titan properly for thirty to forty minutes at most. If he hadn't accomplished his goal before then, he would be rendered completely useless.

These unique traits allowed Eren to plan an ambush far in advance for when Zeke and Pieck would come to Paradis Island that was sure to succeed. Combined with the fact that he had Levi and Erwin as his allies, he saw no reason the Beast or Cart Titans could be a threat to him.

" *Still,*" he mused to himself as he watched from a safe distance how Connie and Sasha were sparring with each other inside their titans, *"Zeke has always been extremely cunning. Combined with how quick witted Pieck is, I definitely can't afford to underestimate them."*

He cracked a smile as Sasha barely managed to dodge a heavy blow from Connie, and desperately tried to create distance between them so she could use her crossbow again. *"Last time, though, we were the ones who got overrun by Annie, Bertolt and Reiner. We had no idea what was going to hit us. This time, however,"* he thought elatedly as Sasha fired a potent bolt at Connie's chest with enough force to knock him off his feet. The resulting crash of the armored behemoth sent a loud bang through the area while dust was kicked up everywhere, startling the horses they were riding. Eren smirked faintly. *"They won't know what is going to hit them!"*

Beside him, Jean was watching the spectacle with bated breath. It looked like Sasha had no chance against Connie whatsoever, since he gave her no quarter, but one direct hit managed to severely cripple him. He tried to get up, but Sasha was on him immediately like a hungry lioness pouncing on her prey. The added weight made Connie a sitting duck, and after a few more futile struggles to throw her off, he gave the signal of defeat, indicating Sasha had won this friendly brawl.

Grumbling under his breath, Connie exited his titan while Sasha had a big grin on her face as she did the same. "Gotcha!" she exclaimed victoriously, her attitude chipper while Connie gave her a chuckle.

"All right, you won that one," he admitted, his voice masking the disappointment of his loss. He accepted Sasha's outstretched hand to hoist him to his feet. While he still won most of their exchanges, the fact he managed to let this one slip out of his grasp hurt Connie's pride a bit. Nevertheless, the wink Sasha gave him afterwards made him forget about it relatively quickly.

"Well done, you two," Eren praised them, keeping his horse steady. Jean was close behind him, giving the pair a smile and a thumbs up in approval. "You've improved massively. Just a few more weeks and then we're going to test how you two will fair against Jean." While both Connie and Sasha were undeniably strong and could hold their own in combat, Jean's colossal titan still proved to be too much for them to handle. Their limbs simply froze solid far too quickly before they could do any significant damage to him. Eren pondered that if they worked as a team, they may prove a worthy challenge for him.

They nodded their heads and gave a salute to Eren. "We won't disappoint you, sir," they both shouted in unison. Eren had to stifle a smile. While he'd preferred that they just called him Eren, Levi had immediately declined that. Humanity's strongest didn't need to elaborate why; Eren knew that if he wanted well trained soldiers, they needed to learn respect and discipline as well.

"Good," Eren stated simply, satisfied with their progress. "I expect you two to prepare for this inevitable battle that's to come. As you know, it *is* possible to defeat him." Again, they gave Eren a salute, indicating that they understood. Since Jean was simply too overwhelming to spar against for Connie and Sasha at the moment, Eren trained him separately alongside Dina and Ymir. Honestly, in a one versus one battle, Eren could only win if he used the Founding Titan or stalled long enough until Jean had frozen himself. Such was the power of the colossal titan. But with Dina at his side, they could damage him enough. The fact he slowly froze himself limited not

only his movements, but made his titan frail as well. The one-time that Eren and Dina accomplished demolishing his ankles, he fell forwards and shattered like an icicle.

"Do you hear that, Jean?" Connie said to his friend playfully, "Sasha and I will be your opponents soon enough and you better be ready for it."

Jean gave them a challenging smirk. "I just hope you guys don't freeze solid in the first five minutes of the battle like last time. I didn't even have to do anything," he replied smugly.

"This time will be different!" Sasha responded with fire in her eyes. "We'll be coming up with different strategies to take you down and we will succeed, mark my words!"

The friendly banter brought Eren back to a simpler time before everything went to complete shit. Honestly, he had missed moments like these so much. He knew if he wanted to protect Paradis and free the Eldians in Marley, speed and surprise were his friends and key factors in succeeding. Shaking his head, he focused on what needed to be done to actually accomplish that goal. They only had eighteen months left to prepare for the inevitable. He still needed to plan his surprise attack on Zeke and Pieck, but for that to work he first needed to get Paradis titan-free as soon as possible. Afterwards, he needed to contact potential allies to aid him in his battle against Marley.

"Captain Eren, sir?" Sasha asked hesitantly, bringing Eren out of his stupor.

Eren gave her a kind, acknowledging smile. "You have permission to speak, Sasha," he told her with a nod of his head.

"Jean just requested if we could take a break?"

Eren gave his elite squad a sheepish smile. He was musing so much that he'd drowned out his surroundings completely. "Granted," he

replied simply. "Report to Annie, Reiner and Bertolt in an hour for further titan training. Afterwards, you'll be having obstacle training using the vertical maneuvering equipment with captain Levi. Dismissed."

They all gave him a salute while Eren trotted off in the general direction of Shiganshina. The fact they had eliminated most titans outside of the walls already gave them plenty of space to train outside of wall Maria without the risk of hurting anybody unexpectedly.

The slow canter of his horse soothed Eren, his mind clearing while a big smile formed on his face. He had done most of his tasks for today and there were still a few hours left before the afternoon would make way for the evening. He figured now was the best time to take a well-deserved break and spent it with the person he loved so dearly.

Underneath a big oak tree, just outside of Shiganshina district, Eren was patiently waiting for Mikasa to arrive. A comfortable breeze blew through the grassy fields and the sun shone vividly in the sky, casting its warm rays on the earth below. At that moment, Eren was perfectly content. He breathed in deeply, enjoying the fresh scent of autumn while the shade of the tree provided excellent shelter from the heat.

He had chosen this place specifically since he used to come here often with Mikasa and Armin when they were just kids. It gave him a sense of nostalgia to meet here with Mikasa, so when he saw her approach on the horizon, his stomach fluttered for her. Even though she was only fifteen years old at the moment, he considered her to be gorgeous already. Her black hair was blowing steadily in the wind while her eyes were filled with warmth. He could see that she sported a small blush on her cheeks, undoubtedly because he invited her to meet him here in the first place.

The beautiful scarf that he had gifted her was neatly wrapped around her neck, partly covering her face. She gave a little wave to him. Eren thought she was absolutely adorable as he beckoned her to come over. "Mikasa!" he said brightly, "you made it!"

Mikasa nodded her head shyly, something that was highly unusual for her, as she sat down next to Eren with her eyes sparkling brightly for the boy. "Yes, I managed to complete my field work early, so Armin gave me permission to go," she replied proudly, the casting light of the sun making her skin shine charmingly. Eren's breath was stolen for a moment; just looking deeply into Mikasa's eyes made emotions rise in his body that he thought he had forgotten.

He patted the space next to him, beckoning her over while giving her a lovely smile. "Well, I hope you're hungry then," he stated, "because I made some sandwiches for us." Eren motioned to the small picnic basket he had brought along, which made Mikasa's eyes widen delightfully. She took the invitation by sitting herself down on the soft grass, leaning snugly against Eren as her blush deepened.

"So, you made these?" she whispered in astonishment as Eren passed her the basket. Inside were multiple peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, as well as a bottle of freshly squeezed orange juice. Eren knew those sandwiches were her favorite, and since both peanut butter and jelly were expensive inside the walls, she only ate them on special occasions. Seeing her face light up just made him fall in love with her all over again.

"I did," Eren revealed happily, passing one of the sandwiches to Mikasa. "I made them specially for you." He absolutely adored how she gasped in amazement like he had just moved heaven and earth for her. Nervously, she took the sandwich out of Eren's outstretched hands and took a bite. The small moan of pleasure that escaped her lips was enough to make a big smile erupt on Eren's face. "I take it you like them?" he questioned cheerily.

"Yes, I do," Mikasa replied between delighted bites, "they are delicious! Thank you so much, Eren!" She sighed contently as she

unconsciously nuzzled her face against his, her breathing turning just a bit erratic at the close contact she had with him.

The soft, feminine scent of grapes in Mikasa's hair was pleasant. It was the cheap soap that she used and he'd always link it to her. Even when they'd married each other and could afford a decent home, Mikasa continued to use the same cheap soap because she knew Eren adored its specific smell. It seemed that she had bathed herself before meeting him here; because the tomboyish clothes that she wore really accentuated her toughness and natural beauty.

She looked like a little angel straight out of a fairy tale, happily munching on her food. Eren couldn't help but chuckle as she got some jelly on her lips. "I'm glad," he said soothingly, wiping away the jelly from her lips with his thumb gently, which made her blush deepen furiously, "that you like them so much. I took great care to make them *just* as you like them. With strawberry jelly and pine nuts."

In reality, Mikasa had never eaten strawberries nor pine nuts before, but Eren knew from experience that she liked those the most. Taking advantage of that fact-since he could acquire them now-had Mikasa in a bliss. She looked at him with pure adoration as she swallowed another bite. "You should eat something too," she said somewhat urgently, grabbing another sandwich from the basket and prying it against his closed lips.

The silliness of the situation made Eren snicker, but he obediently opened his mouth anyway and took a bite from his sandwich. Just as he remembered, they were soft, juicy and delicious. He savored the taste while Mikasa cutely held the sandwich in front of him so he could take another bite. When he had done so-the sweet and nutty flavor of the peanut and jelly sending a happy shiver down his spine-he started to realize she was feeding him.

Suddenly, Eren's bites became a little more nervous and a very dim blush covered his cheeks as he allowed Mikasa to continue to feed him. "Do you like it, Eren?" she questioned him innocently. He had

trouble figuring out if she meant the sandwich or the fact that she was feeding him, but decided to go with the former. "Yes, I really like the combination of strawberry with pine nuts," he admitted, his eyes filled with pleasure. Honestly, the sandwiches were very good.

Once Eren was done with his sandwich, Mikasa finished her own. The adorable blush on her cheeks remained as she rested herself against him fully. "Say, Eren," she spoke idly as he poured her a cup of orange juice, "what's the future like?"

The worry in his eyes was palpable as he handed the cup over to her. He knew she would see straight through a lie if he decided to be dishonest with her. It was part of her Ackerman instinct. The moment she bounded herself to him, he really couldn't lie to her anymore unless he believed the lie himself. "It's..." he hesitated for a long moment before sighing deeply, "not pretty," he admitted honestly. "There's a lot of people out there with the intention to hurt us, Mikasa." Eren paused as he looked up at the cloudless sky, reaching out his hand to the sun as if he wanted to grab it and pull it down to the earth.

"But," he whispered, now eying Mikasa in a loving manner, "I've learned that things aren't always set in stone." The hope in Eren's voice made Mikasa gasp; it was so strong that she could almost feel it—a burning passion and longing for things to change. "Sometimes, you just got to get out there and *do* it." As Eren said this, he tugged his arm towards him in a sudden jerk motion as if he'd really pulled the sun closer to him. "Maybe you don't see any change immediately," he whispered to her, turning her attention towards the sun in the sky, which looked precisely the same as before, "but who's to say your attempt at it didn't change anything?"

Mikasa stayed silent afterwards, pondering what just Eren said while listening to his relaxed breathing. She still had trouble hearing him speak like a full-fledged adult, yet she understood what he meant with his comparison. He was here with a mission, and the world best believe he'd go through with it even if all the odds were stacked against him.

"How many times?" she finally asked him in a soft whisper.

Eren perked a brow, wrapping an arm around her so she could rest her head against his chest more easily. "What do you mean?" he asked her for clarification, even though he had an inkling of what she was guessing at.

"Dina told me about it," Mikasa revealed. "She saw the Tree of Yggdrasil when she was in a coma and all the Eldians as its roots. But more importantly, she saw the Core. She was talking to the Core... Ymir. The first wielder of the power of the titans..." Mikasa swallowed the lump in her throat. "Eren, *how many times?*"

A pained expression appeared on Eren's face. "I... I don't know, Mikasa. More times than I can count. There are only so many things I can predict before something goes terribly wrong. However, I'm *not* giving up. I *will* free all of the Eldians, even if it takes me another million tries." Eren's voice was resolute and came with an aura of finality. He expected Mikasa to protest, but what she did in reality, stunned him into silence.

Her soft hands found his warm cheeks, cupping them as she gently turned his head so she could look straight into his eyes. "I... I trust you, Eren," she whispered, "whatever you do, I'll always be at your side to protect you." Her honey sweet voice was filled with so much adoration that Eren almost missed the delicate touch of her soft lips touching his own. Her kiss was fluffy and filled with passion, symbolizing her promise to him. When she broke her sugary affection to the boy she had crushed on so hopelessly, she fluttered her eyes open again, a happy little smile on her face. "Thank you for the sandwiches," she said as she stood up, reaching out her hand for him. "Let's go back to Shiganshina."

Left with a dumbfounded expression by her action, which turned to a big smile immediately afterwards, Eren took her hand, not letting go of it as he squeezed it gently and reassuringly. "Yes, let's."

The next morning, Eren had a secret meeting deep inside wall Sina about the upcoming battle against the Beast and Cart titans. Even though it was still eighteen months away, he had to brief the generals and get approval from Frieda and Historia Reiss. Other than the diarchy, Dot Pixis, Erwin Smith, Levi Ackerman, Dhalis Zachary, Grisha Yeager and Nile Dawk were present.

"All rise for our benevolent leaders, queen Frieda and queen Historia," Dot Pixis stated loyally as they entered the briefing room.

Eren stood at attention until Frieda raised her hand kindly. "There's no need for such formality, gentlemen. Please, sit." Her smile widened as she let her eyes rest on Eren.

Once everybody was seated again, Dot Pixis continued speaking, "Gentlemen, your majesties, we're gathered here on this secret briefing on behalf of Eren Yeager. As we all know, Eren possesses knowledge about the future and has dedicated his heart to save all the Eldians, not only here on Paradis Island, but also in the neighboring country of Marley where our people have been locked up in internment zones. They've been treated like worthless cattle while Marley has been spreading lies all over the world about us."

Dot eyed each of his comrades seriously. "However, our ancestor Ymir has seen our suffering. Desperate for change, she has sent us Eren, the wielder of the Attack Titan and the Founding Titan, to alter history and free us from the chains brought upon us by Marley. Now, Eren is here in front of us to share with us his plans moving forward," Dot finished as he gave Eren a nod. "If you will?"

"Thank you, General Pixis," Eren said, standing up while radiating the aura of a leader. He made sure to eye everybody in the room individually before starting his briefing. "As all of you have experienced, there's much of the world out there we don't know yet. Even I don't know everything. However, what I do know is that in eighteen months, the beast titan, Zeke Yeager, and the cart titan, Pieck Finger, will travel to Paradis Island with the intention to steal the Founding Titan from us."

"And will they succeed?" Historia questioned innocently, her eyes sparkling with worry. She had fully recovered from her near-death experience, but the fact that she had suddenly been crowned queen alongside her sister she never knew she had, still left her quite speechless. As such, she relied heavily on Frieda, something that was quite adorable to see.

"They won't, milady, simply for the fact that Captain Levi here can quite easily take down the beast titan all by himself," Eren replied confidently. A small smirk flashed on Levi's face, but otherwise, he remained completely silent.

"What are the beast titan and cart titan like?" Zachary inquired curiously. "Even if Captain Levi can take the beast titan down, it's best to know we're fully prepared so we can act if things may go wrong."

Eren nodded his head. "My father, Grisha Yeager, has been kind enough to draw a few compositions of both the beast and cart titan." He mentioned to his father next to him, who opened his leather doctor's bag and handed the drawings to everybody in the room.

"The bespectacled man is Zeke Yeager, wielder of the beast titan. Unlike most titans, this one is seventeen meters tall," Grisha explained professionally, "he has the unique ability to turn Eldians into mindless titans with a roar once they've been exposed to his spinal fluid. This can be exceptionally dangerous if large numbers are exposed to said fluids. Furthermore, his strength and long arms means he's deadly accurate from long range while throwing projectiles."

"So, we just have to sneak up to him and fight him head-on," Levi questioned, quite unimpressed as he looked at the drawings.

"Precisely," Grisha revealed, "though getting close to him might prove quite tricky, seeing how Pieck, the cart titan, is usually at his side." Grisha paused for a moment before he continued. "The cart titan is the only quadruped titan and as such, the fastest titan out of

them all. Though she's very weak, her speed and agility make her tricky to deal with."

"If I understand correctly," Nile offered, "then it is beneficial for us to separate them or get rid of the weaker cart titan first."

A smile appeared on Eren's face. These men were all sly and cunning through and through. He knew he could rely on them no matter what. "Exactly," he said. "The plan I have thought up with my father relies on an ambush. We know they have built a small harbor at the edge of Paradis Island. That is where they will dock. Now, we could attack the ship and demolish them before they can even get to the island, however, we want to keep Marley oblivious to our plans. They're at war with another nation right now and can ill afford to lose precious resources. If we capture the beast and cart titan unbeknownst to Marley, we can potentially ally up with other countries and overwhelm them before they have time to kill the Eldians in their internment zones."

"I see," Erwin muttered after a short and thoughtful hum, "you want to ambush them after they've docked so the ship returns safely to Marley. How do you plan on doing that?"

"Simple," Eren answered. "We'll force them to fight. For this ambush, I'll need two teams: my elite squad and Levi's squad. The armor titan, attack titan and colossal titan will close them in and drive them into a corner, from which they'll have no other choice but to defend themselves. If they somehow still manage to escape, Levi's squad will be there as back up. Our objective is to catch them alive so we can successfully extract the power of the titans out of them."

Everybody in the room seemed to agree with that plan. Satisfied, Eren wanted to sit down again, until Frieda spoke up kindly. "What will happen after we've captured them, Eren?" she asked him sweetly. "I don't think we can have them walking around freely."

"No," Eren agreed, "we can't. That's why we don't have any other choice but to lock them up for the time being, because immediately

after we've gotten their titan powers, we need to take steps in creating allies who can aide us with our surprise attack against Marley."

"And, I suppose you already have a potential ally in mind?" Frieda asked on with a smile, already knowing the answer.

"I do. They are the Azumabito, an influential family from the Hizuru nation. It's important to make contact with them as quickly as possible. Not only because they can give us weapons and technological advancements to help us along, but allying with them shows other countries that we are on their side and want to eradicate the power of the titans as well," Eren said. "I know it all sounds impossible, but look at the progress we've made already."

"I think it's possible," Dot uttered with a curt nod, "we've got surprise on our side for once, and all the intel we need. If we stick to the plan, we can save Paradis and our brethren for good."

"I believe so too," Zachary added.

"Same," Nile voice in.

Erwin just simply nodded his head in agreement, while Levi remained stoic and just listened on.

"Wonderful!" Frieda clapped her hands together. "Eren Yeager, you have my approval."

Eren bowed in respect for Frieda, before turning his attention towards Historia.

She paused for a moment, unsure about the situation, but eventually, she gave a timid nod. "You have my approval as well!" she squeaked empathically.

"Well then," Levi stated while a full-fledged smirk formed on his face. "We better make Paradis completely titan free before that then, don't

we?"

Eren nodded, returning the smirk. "Yes, and I knew you'd look forward to it."

And that's it, people! Did you like it, love it, hate it? Please leave a review! It's immensely appreciated and makes my day a bit brighter again! :3 Next chapter the start of the battle vs Zeke and Pieck! Until then! :D

~Syrup

A Beast and a Cart appear

Hi guys! Here's the next chapter! As always, massive thanks goes to my good friend ARCEUS-master for proofreading this chapter! I hope you guys enjoy it! :3

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

Zeke Yeager, the honorary Marleyan citizen who wielded the beast titan and also the perfect example for every Eldian living within Marley; who strived for a better life by renouncing their devilish heritage, was currently looking idly over the crystal-clear ocean. The sun was beginning to set, casting upon the calm waves a soothing hue of red and orange. They splashed harmlessly against the hull of the ship that had its course set for the island of Paradis. It's been years since Marcel, Annie, Reiner, and Bertolt had been given the delicate mission to retrieve the founding titan. Under orders of commander Magath, Zeke was tasked with the mission to supervise and report their progress so far.

" *I wonder...* " Zeke thought to himself, coolly resting his chin on the back his hands. His elbows were placed firmly on the railing of the ship while the salty sea breeze billowing by reassured him. While his glasses and neatly trimmed haircut made him look more like a professor, his evidently toned physique screamed otherwise. He was by far the strongest and most experienced titan user. As such, he was in direct command of the eager titan shifters seeking to become honorary Marleyans.

Truthfully, Zeke despised Marley. Ever since he purposefully turned in his father and mother to Marleyan authorities, he'd been working as a mole while swearing to himself that he'd avenge them and

somehow free his caged brethren for good. However, that had proven to be quite tricky. Working up the ranks as beast titan meant he had to kill a lot of innocent people from neighboring countries, and now, it was inevitable he probably had to kill a lot of Eldians too. Even though he still considered the Eldians on Paradis island devils by nature, in the end, he knew they couldn't do anything about it. Rather, he felt the blame rested solely on the decision of the treacherous king Fritz.

True, the Eldians on Paradis didn't deserve to live, but that didn't mean massacring them was the right decision. Rather, Zeke had plans to euthanize them once he had the founding titan. Since royal blood ran through his veins, he would have no trouble controlling the founding titan and that way, they'd all die out slowly and peacefully without being able to reproduce. He hoped that'd be enough for Marley to forget the wrongdoings his brethren had done. In turn, that meant the power of the titans would perish as well.

He just hoped everything had gone all right with Marcel, Annie, Reiner and Bertolt. He wasn't sure if it was such a great decision from Marley to leave this crucial mission entirely in the hands of twelve-year-olds. Of course, they had the power of the titans, they had experience with combat and knew how to use their respective titan in battle efficiently. But at the end of the day, they were still kids, not even adolescents either. Sure, they'd be adolescents by now, but Zeke was still of the opinion that sending young adults to Paradis with the power of the titans would've been smarter.

"Hey," a feminine voice greeted him kindly. Getting out of his stupor, Zeke eyed his companion who joined him in gazing out over the endless ocean. "You've been standing here for hours, not even bothering to get anything to eat. Are you thinking about tomorrow?" she questioned curiously. Her eyes were filled with a kindness rarely seen, yet they did nothing to hide her slyness, like a completely transparent veil covering her face. Her beautiful black hair hung undone around her, accentuating her natural beauty. Indeed, Pieck was naturally very beautiful, however, her feral instincts allowed her

to be completely merciless in combat. As the wielder of the cart titan, it was peculiar seeing Pieck outside of her titan, since she could stay inside of it for months on end, and that is what she preferred to do.

As such, it was even more peculiar seeing her stand upright. Usually, she'd walk around on all fours because she found that more natural. Still, Zeke had always considered Pieck his right hand. They complimented each other's strengths perfectly and they made each other's weaknesses practically non-existent. Naturally, it was obvious he'd choose her to come along with him on this critical mission.

"I'm thinking about tomorrow, yes," Zeke answered honestly, breathing in deeply and then letting out a profound sigh. Tomorrow they'd dock at Paradis island, which hopefully meant the final phase of his plan was about to start. "I'm just wondering how Marcel, Annie, Reiner, and Bertolt are doing." He liked the kids, so he hoped they had been doing well.

"They're cunning little things," Pieck reassured him. "I wouldn't be surprised if they've killed off a lot of Devils already. Breaching wall Maria means all the mindless titans have a free pass inside their first line of defense. Marley taught us that most Devils live within wall Maria. So, I'm sure they've located the Coordinate by now, maybe even already come up with a plan to take it." Her voice was steadfast with not a speck of uncertainty. She had full confidence they'd get the founding titan soon so the war the neighboring countries were waging on them would end.

"I have no doubts about that," Zeke lied through his teeth. His silver tongue was unbreakable, hence Pieck believed everything he said. "They are a remarkable bunch, hence why they've proven themselves worthy in inheriting a titan power. What worries me is that we haven't heard *anything* from them."

Pieck perked a brow in astonishment. "That is what's been keeping you musing, Zeke?" She shook her head. "Honestly, sometimes you surprise me." When Zeke gave her a silent plea to elaborate, she did so enthusiastically. "They are on an island full of devils and titans. Do

you think they can afford to give themselves away so carelessly like that? Moreover, you forget the promise King Fritz made when he withdrew to Paradis island. "Heed my warning, for whomever tries to disturb my Paradise shall feel the wrath of a million titans flattening the earth underneath their feet." If they'd been caught, surely the Fritz family would've retaliated by now."

Pieck's reasoning was pretty solid, Zeke knew. However, he also knew that the Will of the King was a little different than what was taught in Marley. The few times he'd been able to talk to the Tybur family, which had conspired alongside king Fritz, he'd heard that the Will of the King also accepted any punishment Marley would inflict upon the Eldians. He wouldn't be surprised if Marley had decided to attack Paradis full out, nothing would have happened other than the destruction of all the Eldians on Paradis.

"You are right." He gave her a fake, but loving smile, "I am probably worrying over nothing." Yet, Zeke couldn't shake off the feeling that something had gone terribly wrong. Maybe he really was nervous over nothing, but the feeling that he had to prepare for the worst persisted.

Pieck saw this too, and gave him an amused chuckle. "Is that why you insisted on bringing along three ships and one-hundred of Marley's finest soldiers?" she asked him playfully, elbowing him slightly. She could see the slight embarrassment appear on his face, yet he wasn't about to change his mind on the notion that it wasn't necessary. Even when Commander Magath asked him why he needed so much back-up, he assured him it was nothing but precautionary if they'd get attacked by enemy ships.

In reality, Zeke was deadly afraid they were going to receive some heavy opposition somehow. If he had full control over the situation, he would've brought along more soldiers, but Commander Magath refused simply because they needed these men to defend Marley. "Yes," Zeke eventually assured Pieck, not changing his mind, "and that's why I brought your battle armor along as well."

Seeing that Zeke didn't want to talk about it further, Pieck let the matter rest, though she kept on wondering why he was being so cautious. Changing the subject, she pointed to the beautiful setting sun. "Gorgeous, isn't it?" she spoke idly, cupping her cheeks as she leaned on the railing of the ship. The wind made her hair blown in every direction while Zeke readjusted his glasses.

While it helped to calm him down, Zeke wasn't particularly fond of nature. Happy that Pieck didn't press on further, though, he nodded his head anyway. "It's certainly a phenomenon. No wonder that we used to see it as a benevolent deity in the sky." Zeke stretched himself lazily, his hunger finally catching up to him as his stomach rumbled.

Pieck giggled while he rubbed the back of his head sheepishly. "You should probably come inside and eat something. I made sure there's plenty of leftovers for you," she stated sweetly, getting on her hands and feet to walk back. "Well, Zeke? Are you coming?"

He sighed. He wanted to decline and ease the uncomfortable feeling in his stomach further, but Pieck just knew how to draw him in and convince him. Maybe it was her tone of voice, or maybe it was the sweet scent of food wafting in his nose. Either way, he let go of the railing to follow Pieck inside of the ship to get some much-needed nutrients inside of his body.

Eighteen months had passed a lot quicker than Eren thought. He could still remember vividly the briefing he had done with the generals and the diarchy like it was yesterday, and now, he was preparing his ambush for when Zeke and Pieck arrived.

Getting Paradis titan-free was pretty easy. After all, he had the founding titan and Dina at his side. Every mindless titan he came across was easily defeated by just ordering them to stay where they were. Then it was just a simple matter of his elite squad to finish them off.

Right now, he was sitting on the wall where his Eldian brethren had been turned into mindless titans by the Marleyan army, sentenced to wander Paradis island forever. It had hurt to kill them off as they were ultimately innocent people, but since there simply was no way to bring them back other than making them inherit a titan power, he had no other choice.

Staring out over the ocean in the general direction he knew Marley was located at, he breathed in deeply. A sense of nostalgia washed over him, recalling the time he stepped foot in the ocean for the very first time. Thinking back on it, he really couldn't fathom that after all he went through, he still had to fight off an entire nation and eventually, the whole world.

Luckily, it was only Marley at the moment and Eren really wanted to keep it that way. That's why the last six months were spent creating ships and potentially reaching the nation of Hizuru and in particular, the Azumabito family. While it started out rough, since nobody on Paradis had knowledge on building an oceangoing ship properly, four months in they finally had success. Since Eren knew where the nation was located at, he'd prepared a little test trip to see how the ship would hold.

He didn't travel the entire distance, because the nation of Hizuru was far away. It'd take at least three months to travel there and another three to get back, but on his findings from the few days he was on the open ocean with the ship, he concluded it'd be durable enough to make the round trip.

So, a month ago, a group of twelve Eldians had set sail towards Hizuru with their ship full of valuable resources easily found on Paradis to show they came in peace and had the offer of a potential alliance.

In that time frame, Eren had practiced his ambush with his team daily. He wanted to make quick work of the beast and the cart titan and not let it escalate in any capacity. The last thing he wanted was to lose one of his team members because of something stupid.

While he was idly rotating some smooth rocks in the palm of his hand that he had picked out of the ocean earlier, he could clearly hear footsteps approaching him. By the way the footsteps carried themselves, Eren knew it was no one other than Levi. He didn't bother turning around, just enjoying the comfortable warm breeze as humanity's strongest stood behind him.

"No ships of Marley yet?" he commented idly, like he had done every day over the past two weeks. He'd find Eren looking out over the ocean for a few hours, before he'd return towards the camp that they'd set up not too far from their current location. At first, Levi didn't really bother with the fact why he did it, but eventually, his interest was piqued enough to come up to him and ask him that question.

"No ships yet," Eren replied. His answer was always the same, too.

Levi would just keep him company silently for about ten minutes. Afterward, he'd leave Eren alone again without another word. However, today something was different than the others, namely the rocks Eren was playing with. "Ocean rocks, right?" Levi couldn't help but ask him.

This time, Eren turned around so he could look into Levi's seemingly unimpressed eyes, yet he could see his curiosity burning underneath as well. "That's right, they are. What gave it away?" he asked.

Levi pointed at how smoothly they moved in Eren's hand. "Because they are perfectly round," he stated matter-of-factly. "You'd see that in river beds too."

"Yes, only these ones form a lot quicker because of the added salt. I like that, personally; the sea removing all the roughness, creating perfect harmony." As Eren said this, he threw the rocks away, making Levi perk his brow.

"Why did you do that?" he asked neutrally. "Didn't you just say that you liked those rocks?" Levi cocked his head a little, but other than that, his expression didn't change whatsoever.

"I do like those rocks, but I can easily find hundreds of different ones, can't I? What should these two rocks matter to me specifically? Aren't they insignificant?" he replied back to Levi, who shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose you're right." He didn't say anything else afterward and continued to stare at the ocean right behind Eren.

"They're arriving tomorrow," Eren revealed, his voice now turning deadly serious. "The sea has been rough all day, yet the wind hasn't changed at all. If I had to guess, it'll be three or four warships in total."

For the first time, Levi was genuinely impressed. He had no idea Eren could predict that by just watching the sea, but apparently there was a good reason why he'd been sitting there staring at the horizon every single day without fail.

"We should probably head back to the camp then, and prepare," Levi suggested, not bothering to wait for Eren as he had already started walking back. Eren closed his eyes, breathing in deeply before exhaling and opening his eyes once more. He knew that tomorrow all hell would break loose around this part of the island. Slowly, he stood up, giving the ocean one last glance.

" *I wonder...*" Eren thought deeply, putting his hands in his pockets, silently following behind Levi as the setting sun began to disappear underneath the horizon.

Paradis island was nothing like Zeke imagined it to be. He'd always thought it'd be a barren wasteland where titans roamed free everywhere, but from a distance, it actually looked pretty beautiful and peaceful. He could vaguely make out the wall Marley had built to protect themselves for any sudden titan attacks. They couldn't climb it even if they were twenty-meter class. "*So , that's where treacherous Eldians are sent to wander Utopia forever,*" Zeke

thought in disgust, that uneasy feeling returning tenfold. It made his stomach feel icky, his heartbeat speed up and his fists clench.

" *Something is definitely not right*," he concluded. He couldn't figure out what it was, but the feral instincts he inherited from the beast titan screamed at him to take action. "Captain!" he yelled from the main deck. "How long before we reach Paradis?" he questioned abrasively.

The captain gave him a signal that it was still about thirty minutes away. Muttering under his breath while his eyes turned sharp, he walked inside again where he knew he'd find Pieck. The young woman was currently resting on a chair, playing a game of cards against some officers, who were losing badly against her.

"You're *definitely* cheating!" one of the officers spat, venom dripping from his lips. He wanted to strangle her so badly, yet Pieck only looked on with amusement twinkling in her eyes at his obvious annoyance.

"Or maybe you're just *that* bad at this game? Who knows? Either way, it's not nice accusing your opponent of cheating when you don't have any proof," she joked playfully.

The officer slammed his hands on the table aggressively, almost spilling his own drink as the cheap furniture rattled underneath the force. "The fact you are a *filthy devil* is proof enough!" he retaliated, hoping to provoke her. However, the only reaction he got out of her was a mocking pout that made his blood boil even further.

"Pieck!" Zeke shouted urgently, grabbing her attention while she gave him a friendly wave.

"Oh, hi, Zeke! Are you here for a friendly match of cards against me as well?" she questioned. His finicky movements made it abundantly clear to her that definitely wasn't the case, so when he'd uttered his next sentence, she became deadly serious.

"Get the soldiers prepared and make sure you're battle-ready before we've reached Paradis island," he commanded her, ignoring her question. "I'll be going on ahead." Not bothering to wait for an answer, Zeke walked outside of the ship again. He made his way to the back of the ship until a voice stopped him.

"Zeke, hang on!" Pieck yelled, running after him. "What do you mean with going on ahead?" For the first time, her eyes were filled with concern for him.

Zeke elaborated simply by pointing to the approaching island. "Somethings is *not* right," he whispered to her. "I don't know what it is, but I'd rather be safe than sorry. The beast titan has excellent swimming capabilities. I'll reach the island in less than five minutes from here and scout ahead."

Pieck's breath caught in her throat. "What do you expect to find on the island then? What has you so spooked that you're going out of your way to do this?" she inquired him nervously.

Zeke had already climbed the railing in the meantime. He looked at Pieck with a seriousness that made her believe whatever was on that island, was going to give them heavy opposition. "The enemy," he replied seriously before he let himself drop into the cool water.

He waited for a good while before shifting himself so as to not accidentally destroy one of the ships. When he did, thunder crackled from above and struck the ocean exactly where he was swimming. Flesh and connective tissue built up all around him and rapidly grew out to form his beastly appearance. He used his powerful and long arms to propel himself forwards in the water freestyle stroke, with the powerful splashes creating considerable waves all around him. He almost looked like a sea-monster, moving at the speed of a torpedo and easily overtaking his own ships. Of course, he swam around them in a wide arc, but still, from Pieck's point of view, it was an intimidating sight to behold.

Once she had shaken herself out of her stupor, she ran back inside of the ship again, barking out orders to prepare and get her battle-ready before they'd reached the island. While she could swim in her own titan just as well, the added weight of her battle armor made her sink like a stone. She had to improvise and shift on the front deck for her transformation, probably destroying most of the ship in the process. Ultimately, Zeke's instincts were never wrong, especially not since he was the beast titan.

" *I just hope you know what you're doing, Zeke,*" Pieck thought, biting her lip as every officer and soldier alike was running around frantically to prepare.

At the same time, Zeke had almost reached the island already. He knew he could already touch the bottom if he wanted to, but his weight wouldn't allow him to move very well since he'd sink ankle-deep into the mud. Rather, he made a few extra strokes so when he stood up, the water just reached his knees. From here, he could easily look over the wall and far inside the mainland of Paradis.

He idly wondered if he'd be able to spot the walls all the way from here, but he quickly concluded that wasn't possible. Paradis island was actually very big. It'd probably take them around a day or two to reach the walls in their titan forms. Still, what he saw he didn't like one bit. "*Where are all the titans?*" he thought sharply, looking over the unblemished plains. He couldn't see a single one of them.

True, they might be all inside the walls since Marcel, Annie, Reiner and Bertolt had breached it, but the number of titans roaming Paradis should be well over one-hundred-thousand. He couldn't fathom that *all* of them would have walked randomly in the breach. Tentatively, he walked all the way out of the water, his large feet rumbling the earth underneath with every thundering step. He looked all around, but the only thing he could spot was the endless plains and the ocean stretching from the east coast and the west coast.

While he wanted to look around, his instincts screamed at him to stay *exactly* where he was. Usually, he'd ignore that, but today, he

decided to listen. He hadn't prepared so carefully for nothing. Not yet spotting anything out of the ordinary except the absence of titans, he waited for his back-up to arrive.

When the ships had docked, Pieck joined him in her quadruped titan form. Her battle armor was strapped on, with four Marley soldiers operating the heavy machine guns on her back. "All right, mind explaining to me now what we should be afraid of so much?" she said, her titan voice producing a heavy rumble.

"You'll see," Zeke responded, reaching down to break off big parts of the wall with his powerful hands to use as ammo. "Tell the officers to keep our one-hundred soldiers at the ready. I have a suspicion we're going to need them soon."

Now feeling confident enough, the beast titan took a step forwards, kicking up dust everywhere. He was now officially on the mainland of Paradis. When nothing happened, he took another step forward and then stopped. He looked around critically, expecting something to happen. His instincts had never been more right.

A good distance away, two powerful yellow-hued thunderclaps struck the ground, indicating the shifting of two titans. Pieck immediately tensed as she joined Zeke's side. Through the smoke, they could see two pairs of very menacing yellow and blue eyes staring back at them, and they definitely weren't friendly. Once the cloud of smoke had cleared enough, two unfamiliar titans stared back at them that vaguely resembled the armored titan and the female titan in Zeke's mind.

"That's definitely not Reiner," Zeke muttered with a snarl, "and not Annie either." He perked a brow as the female titan raised her arms. On top of her arms was a contraption that vaguely reminded him of a crossbow. That realization made Zeke mutter a yelp of surprise as she shot a bolt with deadly accuracy straight at his face. Even though the distance was considerable, Zeke barely had time to dodge the attack. His instincts and reflexes made him jerk back and to the left, causing the arrow to *just* whizz past him harmlessly. Zeke

could feel the raw strength radiate from the attack as the bolt traveled further and dug itself into the ocean behind him, barely missing one of the ships.

"Zeke!" Pieck cried out in worry. "Are you all right?" her concern was palpable even in her titan voice.

"I am, don't worry. Now stay close to me and be ready. If that arrow would've hit me, I would've been defeated in one blow," he warned her, his face turning into an angry snarl as he roared loudly. With a deadly accuracy that easily surpassed that of the titan shifter before him, he threw both of the big pieces of rock he had been handling towards the female titan. However, the armored titan at her side simply defended her by standing in the way of their trajectory. The rocks crashed potently against him and were pulverized into a blast of pebbles and dust upon contact with the shiny onyx scales of the titan, which in turn took absolutely no damage.

"Who are they?" Pieck cried out, following Zeke's advice and staying close to him.

Zeke harrumphed, knowing he had no choice but to use his back-up now. "The enemy," he said simply yet again.

Eren had cursed underneath his breath when he'd noticed the shifting of a titan somewhere on the ocean. They were all lying in position, expertly hidden and waiting for Zeke and Pieck to show up. However, the last thing that Eren had expected was for Zeke to shift and show up in his beast titan form. *"Did he feel something was off?"* he wondered to himself, eying the terrifying appearance of the beast titan as he looked all across the island.

Of course, Zeke couldn't see them, but the fact he didn't move further inland and patiently waited for Pieck to join him made Eren more nervous than he would've liked. He had hidden his teams in multiple areas. Connie and Sasha would be the lead attack. Jean would be back-up when necessary and thus was hidden separately.

Then, he had Levi's team under command of Erwin Smith himself. One team was led by Levi and consisted of Eld, Gunther, and Petra. The other was led by Erwin and consisted of Mikasa, Armin, and Oluo. If somehow that still wouldn't be enough, he still could shift himself and help out.

It was a solid plan and would be more than enough to overpower the beast and cart titans, however, the fact the beast titan wasn't doing anything yet made sweat drip from Eren's face. *"C'mon, Zeke. What are you afraid of? Move..."* Eren thought desperately. His prayers were left unanswered as instead, the ships managed to dock and joining the beast titan's side was the cart titan. However, the moment Eren saw her fully prepared for battle, he knew Zeke was somehow anticipating an ambush.

"How is it possible?" he thought, annoyed that his half-brother apparently had a sixth sense. Maybe it was one of the beast titan's skills that he was unaware of. It did make sense, and if that was the case, Eren had no choice but to attack him while the ships remained docked, meaning Marley would definitely realize something was going on.

"It isn't optimal, but then again, no plan ever works out exactly the way how you want it to go. It's a good thing we rehearsed a few times for this exact scenario as well," he reasoned with himself. When the beast titan finally had made a few steps forward, he gave the signal for Connie and Sasha to shift. *"Let's see how you will answer to this,"* Eren thought confidently.

As expected, Zeke was at a loss for words the moment his head nearly got blown off by Sasha and his attack was simply blocked by letting it hit Connie's thick armor. *"Excellent. Even with their precautions, it seems this battle will be a breeze,"* Eren reasoned, calming himself down somewhat.

That was the case until about one-hundred Eldian prisoners appeared behind the beast titan.

And then, Zeke reared back and let out a thundering roar.

And that's it for this chapter, people! Did you like it, love it, hate it? A review would be appreciated! Next chapter the start of the battle against Zeke and Pieck! Hope to see you then! :3

~Syrup

Vs Zeke and Pieck: All out assault

Hey guys, here's the next chapter! Hope you enjoy! :3 Shout-out goes out to my good friend ARCEUS-master for beta reading this chapter. It is very much appreciated, as always! :D

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

The ground quaked with merciless resolve as monstrous streaks of yellow lightning bolts ignited all around the beast and cart titans in a wide arc. Even under the bright rays of the sun, the piercing flashes were blinding as heaven-shaking shock-waves spread across the land and violently rattled trees and grasslands alike. The harrowing roar of one-hundred Eldians forcefully shifting into mindless titans at once was ear-deafening and near soul-crushing. Everywhere, they dropped down on the ground like a bombardment, crawling around, trying to find their footing or otherwise just getting tangled up in each other among the thick veil of scorching steam they naturally generated. The faces they made ranged from deranged grins to straight up looking like they were completely drunk. Some were only five-meters tall, others were a whopping twenty meters tall, but one thing they all had in common: Zeke had complete control of them.

Connie and Sasha shifted uncomfortably inside their titans at the sudden opposition. This wasn't something they had practiced for and as such, they were logically a little nervous. *"This might turn out very bad,"* Connie thought, standing in front of Sasha protectively. While these titans couldn't do much against him, one of those twenty-meter-classes could easily take out Sasha if it got close. The worst they could do to him was immobilize him. *"But that means I can't protect Sasha anymore,"* he realized with dread, looking at the general direction where he knew Eren was hidden for orders.

Sasha too was sweating inside her titan. This was supposed to be an easy fight, not a dangerous all-out war that could potentially take her life. *"What do we do now? There's no way we can keep all of them off of us,"* she thought direly, her heartbeat quickening. She saw that Connie was nervous too, if his protective attitude was any indication.

The scene of one-hundred titans looking at them creepily alongside the beast and cart titan was eerie, to say the least, especially when Zeke let out another roar. The mindless titans all began to charge at them like feral animals, causing the ground to rumble like with an earthquake. Some ran like they were lunatics, others like they were completely out of it and others still used both their hands and legs to sprint at them crazily, intimidating Connie and Sasha for some very crucial seconds. Luckily for them, Eren, along with Levi and Erwin, were quick thinkers.

Only with the distinct yellow lightning and resounding thunderclap of a third titan shifting were they brought out of their stupor. Eren's attack titan was menacing and his roar powerful. He wasted no time hardening his fists and charging at one of the leading twenty-meter-classes and punching it straight in its face. The resulting blow made the titan's head violently explode from its torso as blood and a gush of scalding steam flew everywhere. Its body dropped to the ground like a sack of potatoes, crashing lifelessly against the grassy soil. The moment Eren had taken down the first titan, vertical maneuvering equipment was used from both directions as Levi's and Erwin's team came out of their hiding spots.

"Charge!" Erwin shouted bravely, drawing a sword and raising it high as he flew across the air. "Protect our fellow titan soldiers, don't let them get close! Advance! *Shinzou wo sasageyo!*" His team followed suit behind him, roaring like proud lions as they shot their hooks into the stampeding horde of titans.

Levi was the first to reach a titan, zooming past its neck like a bullet and slicing its nape perfectly. It resulted in the titan falling down comically, its everlasting grin still present on its face as it died. The

titans behind it got tripped up, falling down over each other and slowing down part of the horde considerably. "You heard the commander!" he shouted with a loud snarl on his face to his team, already focusing on the next titan. "Don't let them get close!"

The bravery of their team gave Connie and Sasha hope. She nodded her head once towards Connie before charging her arm crossbow again, shooting it at the incoming titans. The potent bolt pierced straight through the head of a ten-meter-class, completely ripping it to shreds. It fell down lifelessly while the bolt continued its trajectory, penetrating a second and third titan behind it and severely crippling them.

Eren looked at Connie and crossed his arms, signaling him to advance. *"I will defend Sasha, you will be more efficient right in the chaos of battle,"* he thought, backing off while Connie smirked.

"Time for me to do some damage!" He roared deeply, charging straight at the approaching titans like an angry bull. An oblivious fifteen-meter-class tried to meet him head-on. Unfortunately for the titan, Connie's exoskeleton was made of such sturdy material that he simply tore through its body like it was made of wet paper. Boiling blood splattered everywhere as the titan disintegrated into a bloody pulp while Connie charged on like nothing had happened, swinging his fist into an uppercut against a twenty-meter-class.

His fist hit the titan with so much strength that he split the titan's head in half, the force carrying his arm straight through his head. The momentum shift ripped the remaining tissues that were still connecting the titan's head with its body cleanly off, sending what remained of its head flying high in the sky while its body flipped forwards awkwardly, crashing to the ground below and crushing a pair of unaware five-meter-class titans into a bloody mess.

Meanwhile, Eren had made his way towards Sasha to defend her against any titan that may break through Connie and the soldiers' line of defense. She looked at him gratefully, firing off another powerful bolt at a ten-meter-class. Its head popped like an overripe

watermelon the moment Sasha's bolt hit it, making the titan's momentum come to a sudden halt. Its body crashed and flipped over the ground a few times, kicking up grass and mud everywhere until it eventually slid to a complete stop.

Immediately after, from the smoke, an abnormal five-meter-class jumped up like a frog. Cross-eyed and its tongue lolling out of its mouth, it leaped at Sasha with its superior leg muscles at speeds that completely caught her off guard. Shrieking in reflex, she put her arms in front of her body in a desperate attempt to defend herself. However, the moment it was going to bite her and pierce her flesh with its sharp teeth, Eren's hardened foot met it in a powerful low kick.

The smaller titan simply exploded into nothing but blood and flesh, completely covering Sasha's titan in the boiling-hot remains of it. Eren sighed deeply and thanked his quick reflexes, seeing that Sasha was all right. *"I'm not going to lose you a second time,"* he thought to her resolutely. Getting back into the game, he roared as another titan approached them.

Zeke was watching the battle unfold with wide eyes. His muscles simply refused to work when another unknown titan had shifted to help out the presumably armor and female titans, as well as about eight highly trained soldiers that were deftly flying in the air with contraptions he'd never seen before, easily slicing up his titans like they were cheap meat.

"Zeke, what do we do now?" Pieck asked him urgently, feeling completely lost at the sudden reinforcements the two titans had gotten. Honestly, she knew that if they didn't do anything, it would only be a matter of time before all of their mindless titans would be defeated.

"Get in close and try to shoot down those soldiers," he ordered her. "They're all occupied with holding off the titan horde, so you should have an easy time taking them out. That will keep those other three

titans busy for a little while longer. I'll see if I can flank them and attack them from the rear."

Pieck nodded her head, rapidly darting into the battle while the Marleyan soldiers inside her battle armor cocked their machine guns, ready for action. Once Pieck had disappeared inside the mass of titans, Zeke started to walk to the right and away from the heated battle, grabbing more chunks of the stone wall as ammunition in the process while a thousand questions raced through his mind. *"Who are they and how did they know we would come to Paradis island?"*

The obvious answer was that they somehow captured Marcel, Annie, Reiner, and Bertolt. That would be the most logical explanation as to why they had the armor and female titan in their procession. *"They probably tortured them and then had some of their soldiers eat them to get their titan powers,"* he thought as anger crept in his system. *"Worse, that means the jaw and colossal titans could provide them backup any moment now. That would be extremely dangerous."*

Still, that wouldn't explain all of it. For example, Paradis didn't have any titan fluid to his knowledge, other than the royal family who possessed some to carry on the founder. But then, it wouldn't make sense they'd use what little they had on soldiers if they could have just as easily made the founder eat all of them to gain their powers.

Then there was still the fact they knew he was coming to Paradis down to the day. Even if Marcel, Annie, Reiner, and Bertolt had told these Devils everything, they wouldn't have known when Marley would've ordered for him to do a follow-up and brief them about the situation. *"Unless they've managed to get spies into Marley in that time-frame,"* Zeke pondered to himself.

That was still a very unlikely scenario. The people of Paradis were kept oblivious by the king. As such, they'd never even seen the ocean before. Their technology would be limited severely, so for them to find out the truth about the world, kill all the titans on the island and develop boats that would prepare them for his arrival on such a tight time-frame was simply ludicrous.

" *Unless somebody already possessed this knowledge,*" Zeke reasoned with himself, not liking this idea whatsoever. He knew very well that it could be a possibility. Since gaining the power of the beast titan, Zeke started to realize that every Eldian was connected by invisible paths with each other. Moreover, these paths would span across time and space, too. *"Could it be somebody acquired the knowledge in advance and somehow acted upon it?"*

If that was true, then it still wouldn't make any sense. This knowledge would come in dream-like states; visions, if you will. Why would any oblivious Eldian act upon such ludicrous dreams? They simply wouldn't understand it. *"Then... maybe it was not an Eldian?"*

This wouldn't work either. Both the Ackerman family and Azumabito family who weren't affected were wiped out and since they are not Eldians, they couldn't have gotten this information. *"It had to be an Eldian, but not any Eldian, a knowledgeable one with vast experience,"* he thought as he made his way around the battlefield. He let his eye rest on the unknown third titan far in the distance, who was expertly protecting the female titan. *"It didn't show up immediately, only after I used my trump card. Could that be the attack titan?"*

If that was the attack titan, it would make sense that whoever was controlling it could have been the one who possessed the knowledge necessary to take down Marcel, Annie, Reiner, and Bertolt. *"Could it be the attack titan possesses the knowledge of future events?"* Again, it made a lot of sense in Zeke's mind and was the only logical explanation for this well-coordinated ambush, because something of this magnitude had to have been prepared months in advance.

Zeke didn't get much time to think any further as a white light suddenly blinded him. *"What..."* An enormous explosion detonated in front of him, knocking him cleanly off of his feet while his entire body got burned in the process. The beast titan landed several dozen meters back in a heavy crash that kicked up dirt and mud in all directions, with smoke rising from his body as his healing factor kicked in, desperately trying to repair his burned flesh. At first, he

thought it was a bomb, even though that didn't make any sense whatsoever. However, the moment he opened his eyes, he wished it would've been just a bomb.

Blocking his way was none other than the almighty colossal titan, though it didn't look like the colossal titan as he remembered it whatsoever. It was far bulkier and an immediate hailstorm lowered the temperatures drastically to freezing point all around it. Even though whoever was controlling it had shifted fifty meters in front of him, the explosion was still potent enough to hurt him severely. Looking down on him like he was nothing more than a disobedient little child that needed to be reprimanded, the colossal titan moved his enormous feet, making Zeke back off quickly lest he'd be stepped on like he was nothing but a petty insect. The shock-wave bounced the beast titan up in the air, who quickly tried to get up on his feet and create distance between them. *"Well,"* Zeke thought, snarling and cursing under his breath, *"I think my theory might be correct."*

The utter chaos that ensued after the battle began had both teams of four split up. Mikasa was grimacing as a weird, ten-meter-class which looked more like a praying mantis than anything else approached her menacingly. Its face was oval-shaped while its eyes almost popped out of its skull, large and round, staring into seeming nothingness. It had both of its wrists fully flexed while sitting in a squat position, awkwardly shuffling forwards. *"An abnormal,"* she thought to herself, knowing those could be very dangerous because of their sheer unpredictability.

"Armin!" she shouted over the sound of battle, knowing the blonde-haired boy was close by. He was currently finishing off a fifteen-meter-class, blood covering his entire body as he raced towards Mikasa's side. Despite looking like a serial-killer, Armin was completely calm. "Mikasa, are you all right?" he asked her, concerned for her well-being.

She nodded her head and instead pointed one of her blades to their slowly advancing opponent. "I might need some back-up on this one," she explained. No sooner when she had said this, the praying mantis titan cocked his head almost ninety degrees clockwise and then leaped forward, making both Mikasa and Armin widen their eyes and give a small start.

They jumped out of the way with their vertical maneuvering equipment as the titan crashed unto the spot that they had been standing on just a mere second ago. Mikasa wanted to retaliate by slicing its nape now that it was in a disadvantageous position, but soon realized with horror that it had a second jaw at the *back* of his face. "*What...*" she thought with a disgusted, startled grimace.

She couldn't change her trajectory as the titan extended his neck backward to crunch her down, only for Armin to fly into her just at the nick of time, making the titan's second jaw snap at nothing but air. Mikasa's whole body felt numb for a moment as she realized Armin had just saved her life. She couldn't feel anything around her until Armin shook her out of it.

"Mikasa!" he shouted urgently, "distract its first jaw and I'll finish it off!" Armin hoisted her to her feet and was already in the air again, making Mikasa quickly follow suit as her limbs cooperated once more.

"Right!" she yelled through the thick layers of smoke the battle created. The praying mantis titan got up from its spot, its head cocking dumbly before it leaped and snapped at Mikasa once again. This time, she was prepared and moved out of the way efficiently. While the titan was mid-jump, following Mikasa around, it never saw Armin coming from below, slicing its nape lethally. The titan crashed ungracefully on its face, spasming awkwardly a few times before it stopped moving.

"*That was way too close,*" she thought, her heart beating uncontrollably against her chest. "*I need to be careful.*" As she thought this, she could hear the distinct sound of heavy machinery

shooting its ammo through the smoke. "*The cart!*" she realized, widening her eyes as Armin landed next to her.

"Do you hear that?" she said to him.

He nodded his head. "Sounds like trouble, remember what Eren and I have taught you about machine guns. Keep moving and don't sit still," Armin suggested.

Mikasa loved how much the blonde-haired boy had grown. Even though he was very afraid and nervous before the battle began, he used all of that to turn it into bravery. His brain worked a mile a minute and the excellent strategist inside of him turned him into a formidable foe on the battlefield too.

While navigating through the dense steam, Mikasa quickly realized her teammates were in a lot of trouble. Oluo, Eld and Gunther were desperately trying to avoid the bullets fired at them while the cart swatted her claws at them as if they were annoying mosquitoes. They were getting pretty tired and the only way they had held out until now was because of the cover provided by the steam, making the Marleyan soldiers fire wildly and randomly.

"Don't give them a quarter!" Pieck roared fiercely, encouraging her soldiers to keep on firing. Mikasa grinned; their distraction meant Armin and her could use their secret weapon. She had every bit of confidence that it'd work, but before she could get in a clear shot, a random bullet which had ricocheted off of the ground drove itself into Armin's upper arm.

He gave a cry of pain as he lost his balance and crashed into the ground, hurting his arm further as it bent in such a way that it normally couldn't. "Armin!" Mikasa yelled worriedly, changing her trajectory so she could help Armin out. He had fallen perfectly in front of the snout of Pieck, who looked stupidly at his hurt form. Like the deities had delivered him on a silver platter, he had dropped out of the sky before her. She hadn't even realized a fourth soldier had

joined to aid the other three she had been hunting amidst the chaos of battle.

" *Well, if this isn't perfect,*" she thought cheekily, opening her jaw and making sure to chew *thoroughly* before swallowing whatever was left of him down. Mikasa was never going to make it, even if she used her secret weapon, she wouldn't be able to save Armin. She cursed loudly at her own short-comings. He had just saved her life and she couldn't even save his in return.

Pieck was sure of this as well. In fact, she was so focused on scooping up the defenseless Armin in her jaw that she completely ignored the large shadow looming over her. In hindsight, she probably should've reacted to it. Instead, a large and armored foot delivered a devastating kick on her side. Like she was nothing but a hockey puck, she slid across the ground, all the soldiers on her back immediately being knocked unconscious while she herself sported a large gaping wound on her midsection.

"Connie!" Mikasa yelled, her face immediately brightening. Honestly, she had never been happier to see him in her life. She flew down towards Armin to support him, who was sweating profusely and keeping his eyes closed.

"H-how bad is it?" he mumbled to Mikasa, nausea threatening to overwhelm him. His left arm was bleeding profusely from the wound and it probably was fractured on multiple places. She quickly closed off the wound with some band-aid, while Oluo, Gunther, and Eld landed in front of Armin as well to support him.

"Just a scratch," Mikasa lied, leaving Armin in the hands of Levi's personal team. "Please tend to his wounds. I'm going to finish what Connie started." She flew off in the general direction Connie had kicked the cart titan, her eyes burning with rage.

Pieck was just barely recovering from that massive blow until two small projectiles were shot into her side, sizzling dangerously. "*Huh...*" she thought in confusion, until the projectiles exploded

violently, destroying her battle armor and blasting her body to smithereens, killing the soldiers on her back. Only her head was still intact, meaning she was still alive and breathing, but her titan was rendered completely useless. Hissing, she wanted to eject out of her titan, but Mikasa landed perfectly on her nose, her eyes dark and murderous.

"You tried to eat one of my best friends," she hissed darkly, venom dripping from every syllable she uttered while the barrels of the thunder spears she'd just fired off were still smoking. "Let's see how much pain I can inflict upon you before you pass out."

Pieck could only look on in absolute fear as Mikasa started to cut her out of her titan.

Not far from their location, Levi and Erwin were locked into a fierce battle with four twenty-meter-class titans. Standing back to back against each other, swords drawn since they were cornered, they waited for their moment to strike. One of the titans with a perpetual angry snarl on its face reached down to grab them. However, the moment he tried to do so, Levi shot a hook in its shoulder, slicing up its entire arm as he reeled himself up. The titan hadn't even time to react as Levi wheeled around to cut its nape, making it fall down haplessly.

A second titan looked on dumbly at the spectacle, only for him to find his demise by Erwin letting out a loud war cry, blades drawn to slice the titan open. He had used the opportunity to shoot himself in the sky, landing his blades perfectly on the nape of the titan and killing it efficiently.

This, apparently, seemed to enrage the other two titans. They clapped their hands together to squash Erwin and Levi like flies, one targeting Erwin and the other Levi. While both dodged the attack pretty easily, Levi didn't take into account the resulting sonic boom of the titan's hands clapping together.

He grunted as he was blown off his feet from the force, not sustaining any significant damage. Unfortunately, another ten-meter-class was grinning down on him maniacally, his jaw already opened to munch on him like a juicy snack. Even with Levi's inhuman reflexes, there was no way to get out of the way in time. He was already formulating a plan to slice himself out of the titan's mouth, but like a guardian angel, Petra descended from the sky and made quick work of the titan, saving Levi from a potentially deadly situation.

The titan dropped down heavily in front of him and while Levi's expression stayed painfully neutral, from the inside, his heartbeat was quickening for her. He knew he'd developed a crush on Petra, but since he was her captain, he had ignored those feelings until he had had a very eye-opening conversation with Eren. Needless to say, he was pretty certain he was going to pursue her after this battle had ended.

Right now, though, he had more pressing matters to attend to. Those being helping Erwin out, as he was struggling to fight off two titans all alone at the moment. "Petra," he commanded her, "stay close."

A very light and cute blush appeared on her cheeks as she nodded and followed Levi's lead. She backed him up perfectly as Levi shot through the sky lethally, giving Erwin some much-needed breathing space as he sliced through one of the twenty-meter-classes effortlessly. Petra followed it up beautifully, like she was a living extension of Levi. He gave her the boost she needed to propel her forwards, her aim immaculate as she finished off the other titan.

Erwin smiled gratefully at them, his fatigue clearly showing as he breathed in deeply. The battle was clearly taking a toll on all of them, but at least they were making progress. "How are the others doing?" Erwin asked. The chaos all these titans created gave them excellent cover to finish them off smoothly and efficiently.

"No clue, but I trust they'll be doing fine," Levi responded confidently. He had handpicked all of them and so far, they hadn't disappointed

him. He was pretty sure they could stand their ground on their own. "I have to say, that beast titan is every bit of cunning as Eren made him out to be." Levi tsk'ed as he admitted this. He didn't want to, but fighting off one-hundred mindless titans wasn't something they had prepared for.

"This means our surprise attack on Marley goes up in smoke too," Erwin stated. "Those boats that were docked probably have already left the island at this point, meaning Marley will be warned about our rapid advancement very soon." It was an unfortunate set of circumstances, but one they could do nothing about.

"All the more reason to get into contact with Hizuru as soon as possible," Levi responded, unconsciously standing in front of Petra protectively in case a titan would suddenly jump at them.

"Let's clean up these titans first," Erwin suggested, before multiple loud zipping sounds whizzed past them at incredible speed. They looked around in confusion, wondering what just happened, until Levi realized what was going on with widening eyes.

"Duck!" he shouted loudly, pulling down Petra with him as Erwin followed in tow. Not as soon as he'd said this, another barrage of rocks whizzed past them.

And that's it for now! We're in the midst of the battle, people! Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review please! They make my day and I love to read and respond to them! :D Next chapter we'll see Jean in action against Zeke, as well as the conclusion of this battle and this arc! Until then! :3

~Syrup

Vs Zeke and Pieck: Titanic Battle

Next chapter is here, people! As always, shout out goes to my good friend ARCEUS-master for editing! Enjoy! :3

"Titans!" Speech

"*Titans!*" Thoughts

Jean was always amazed by how much of the island he could truly see every time he shifted into his colossal titan. Towering over everybody meant a human was like an ant to him. As such, the once-mighty beast titan didn't look like more than a small child in comparison. It made him feel invincible, but he knew that was far from the truth. Sasha and Connie had defeated him plenty of times, but that was only after they had come up with very smart strategies and executed them with excellent teamwork. *"That's right,"* he thought, grinning confidently, *"the beast titan does not know how to deal with me."*

Then there was also the fact that he had no other adversaries to deal with. Jean could focus all of his attention and efforts on the beast titan without worrying about anything else. The absolute horror and incredulity on the beast titan's face told him that he took him by complete surprise. *"So, what are you going to do now, Zeke Yeager?"* Jean thought with a sly smirk as he took another powerful and rumbling step forward.

The icy blizzard and snow that covered Jean's humongous titan form battered the beast titan harshly all across his body, inflicting dozens of cuts and scrapes that were frozen immediately. The beast titan had just managed to get to his feet when he noticed the large foot of the colossal titan about to crush him into a bloody pulp. Reacting purely out of reflexes, Zeke dived to the side. Jean's foot crashed

mercilessly into the ground, flattening the earth where the beast titan just stood. A loud rumble reverberated through the area as random trees were uprooted, while dust and mud were kicked up violently.

Jean tsk'ed, realizing the beast titan had dodged his attack. He turned around slowly, noticing that Zeke had backed off from him considerably to get out of the hailstorm. *"Clever,"* he thought, *"using his superior speed to his advantage. Though it seems it will only be a matter of time before I have him frozen solid."* Pressing on his offense, Jean raised one of his long arms, preparing to swipe it in a wide arc all around him and smack the beast titan in his side lethally.

Zeke seemed to realize that he needed to keep a safe distance, and the fact Jean was terribly slow gave him the opening he needed. The two big chunks of stone he had taken with him as ammo were hurled at Jean's monstrous face with perfect precision and devastating force, shattering against his chin and left cheek. They got pulverized into dust upon impact, doing a decent amount of damage as large cracks appeared all around the areas Zeke had struck him. Jean frowned, not slowing down his attack whatsoever.

" So, you chose to hit me? Bad decision . How will you ever survive this hit from me now?" Jean thought, his arm swinging through the air mercilessly like he was about to smite Zeke. There was no way the beast titan could dodge now that he had decided to go for offense. While Jean worried a bit about the damage he sustained from a single attack, he knew the damage the beast titan would sustain from a single attack in retaliation would be ten times heavier.

His arm sliced through the air potently, with the enormous momentum of the hit transferring toward Zeke's body the moment he connected the palm of his hand against the beast titan's side. A loud, thunderous clap echoed through the area. The beast titan was violently thrown from his spot with a blast of ice enveloping him, swirling through the air like an unconscious ballerina. He slid against the ground a few times before becoming airborne again, his velocity smashing him cleanly through a few trees until he finally started to

slide across the hard surface of the earth below, his fur and skin burning away as he carved a deep crevice across the landscape.

Eventually, the beast titan skidded to a halt around one-thousand meters away from where he was initially hit. Jean looked at his handiwork pridefully, knowing for a fact that should have been more than enough to render the beast titan useless. *"I'm surprised he stayed in one piece through all of that, but there's no way he could've tanked it and still be capable of battle!"* Jean thought, nodding his head inwardly. Now it was just a matter of keeping watch over him until the rest had cleaned up the mindless titans and the cart titan.

However, that's where Jean's train of thoughts came to a complete halt. When he took a look at his hand, he noticed with widening eyes that three of his five fingers were completely missing. Moreover, the palm of his hand was cracked severely. *"What the..."* he hissed in alarm, raising his head to look at the beast titan, who was actually slowly rising to his feet.

While the beast titan had suffered some severe damage from the launch, it wasn't anything he couldn't heal off. The side Jean had smacked was completely intact. Jean was about to gawk at how that was even possible when he noticed why. *"He... he hardened his side much like Eren can,"* Jean thought incredulously. Zeke had a lot more tricks up his sleeve than he'd initially thought.

True, Zeke's left arm was completely demolished, a big gash ran across his torso and his back was completely burned off, but he was still standing. His still usable arm reached down to a big rock that was partially buried into the ground. With some effort, he unearthed it. Zeke glared at Jean with glowering eyes, reared back while aiming, and then threw the massive boulder with a loud roar.

Jean was way too slow to put up any form of defense as the rock soared through the air, perfectly colliding against his chin again and destroying a part of his face in the process. Jean stumbled back slightly as his lower jaw joint was ripped apart while cracks ran

through his entire head. *"I need to take his impeccable accuracy into account. He's like Sasha, always hitting precisely what he wants."* Jean grumbled, knowing he had to improvise if he wanted to defeat the beast titan now. *"However, if you think you're the only one who can throw stuff, then you've got another thing coming!"*

Realizing that his left hand was mostly useless after the damage it took; Jean did something that had Zeke shifting uncomfortably. With a loud crack, he ripped off his remaining two fingers, turning them into two lethal makeshift projectiles. He threw them at the beast titan with all the power he could muster, the icicles whizzing intimidatingly with the speed they were traveling at.

Jean loved how he managed to catch Zeke entirely off-guard. While the beast titan had a lot of time to prepare for his powerful swipe, there was no way he could block both of his fingers in the state he was currently in. Cleverly, Jean had thrown one of the lethal projectiles at the general direction of his head while the other was sure to take out one of his legs. *"This is checkmate for you,"* Jean thought assuredly.

Just as he had expected, Zeke hardened his face in preparation for the incoming projectiles. While he perfectly blocked one of the icicles-since it shattered harmlessly against his crystalized face-the other zoomed past his leg and sliced through flesh, bones and arteries like they were made of paper, severing his leg from his body.

Immediately, the beast titan lost his balance and crashed to the ground. His broad and clumsy torso made it so he smashed his face roughly against the earth below, tearing down the pasture and kicking up dust everywhere. *"That was a perfect shot,"* Jean thought with great pleasure, pride practically beaming from his face. He definitely wasn't a slouch when it came to aiming and accuracy, but he'd thrown these two projectiles pretty much automatically. Only after he had hit his mark did pride start to well up in his body. Now it was just a matter of finishing off the beast titan and he'd won.

Slowly, Jean started to make his way over to the fallen beast titan. Since he'd kicked up a lot of dust, he couldn't really see his opponent at the moment, but he knew he'd pretty much crippled him. *"There's no way he's going to make it out of this one,"* Jean thought confidently from within his lumbering titan, as his massive feet sent shock-waves of incredible magnitudes throughout the area. He was so focused on getting close enough to freeze Zeke solid that he failed to see the barrage of decently sized rocks thrown his way through the smoke until it was already too late.

"What...?" Jean hissed in alarm, his already damaged face getting pelted so heavily that his lower jaw unhinged completely and ripped off with a loud crack, falling down to the ground like a big piece of a glacier breaking off. Jean cursed loudly underneath his breath. He knew Zeke was trying to decapitate him by slowly demolishing his head completely, because that would cause Jean to be ejected from his titan. *"If that happens..."* he grumbled, now permanently covering his face with his right hand while peeking through his fingers. *"No matter, it's just a matter of seconds before I've crushed him. Then I can get him out of his titan and render him completely useless for the remainder of the battle."*

In fact, Jean was so convinced about his assumption that he never expected Zeke's next move. His icy titan had already raised his foot high in the air, intent to bring it down on the spot where the heavily damaged beast titan had crashed to a halt after he'd smacked him away. However, that's where Jean's confidence died completely with a brief gasp. The smoke cleared enough for him to see that the beast titan was nowhere in sight. *"What the...?"* Jean thought with wide eyes. His heart skipped a beat when he realized he'd been deceived. *"Then where...?"*

Out of the corner of his eyes, Jean saw his foe suddenly appear. Zeke's beast titan was clearly on his last legs, but the amber glint in his eyes radiated fire and rage. The roar he let loose was deafening while he threw a very bulky and spiky pillar straight at the colossal titan's left ankle. Jean cursed heavily as it crashed against his pretty

brittle joint, turning into nothing but dust on impact. However, since Jean was still standing on one leg, the damage was enough to make his ankle twist awkwardly due to his heavy weight. A loud crack reverberated through the area as Jean's ankle broke, his tibia and fibula fracturing on multiple spots along the width of his talus.

Jean let out a loud yelp as he completely lost his balance, his clunky frame wasn't built to have the reflexes necessary to soften his landing in any way, shape or form. He could only scream as his titan collapsed to the cold hard ground like a sack of potatoes. The crash was so powerful and created such an enormous thundering sound that Paradis Island seemed to shake on its foundations. Icy winds blew in every direction where Jean had fallen, kicking up big chunks of earth, rocks, and dust.

Zeke was completely blown off of his feet, his beast titan frozen so much from the merciless and numbing winds that Jean's titan produced that his hands completely disintegrated into nothing but shattered pieces of bloody flesh when he tried to break his fall. His healing factor had stopped working completely and the damage he had sustained rendered his titan utterly useless at the moment.

Finally, the noise of the crash died down until nothing but the howling of the unforgiving winds remained. Zeke groaned heavily inside his titan. His head was bleeding, as he felt the warm trickle of blood run down his face along with a splitting headache that wracked his mind. He was pretty sure he had gotten a concussion; something that took at least a day before it would be healed completely. Not that he could heal much right now, considering he was currently freezing. He knew he needed to get out of his titan soon if he wanted any chance of aiding Pieck in the battle going on further up ahead. Steeling himself, he prepared to eject himself, until a big shadow looming over him stopped him dead in his tracks.

" *There's no way...*" Zeke thought incredulously, completely petrified. Apparently, that crash hadn't defeated Jean's titan completely. Through the dense cover of the smoke, Zeke could see one of his yellow eyes glowing menacingly. The shadow looming over him was

the colossal titan's outstretched arm and hand, intent to squash him like a pesky bug and finish the battle once and for all. Even though Jean's arm was heavily cracked, it had survived the fall. While there was no way Jean could stand up or move, he could still move his humongous arm and reach the beast titan. There was also nothing Zeke could do to stop it; he could only watch as Jean raised his arm high in the sky before bringing it down.

Zeke gritted his teeth and closed his eyes, waiting for the inevitable to come. However, nothing happened. *"He's probably taunting me, waiting until I open my eyes again to finish me off,"* Zeke thought, still not opening his eyes. A few more minutes passed and still, nothing had happened. Finally, Zeke decided to see what was happening. When he opened his eyes, he saw Jean's hand just a few meters from his face, completely frozen solid. *"He... He froze himself,"* Zeke realized with an odd sense of revelation. He had noticed throughout the battle that his opponent was getting slower and slower as time went on, but he brushed this off as nothing out of the ordinary. Now he understood that this particular colossal titan was very lethal but ran on a very short timer. Silently, he ejected himself from his beast titan, his teeth clacking as he left the devastated area where he'd fought his opponent into a standstill, their frozen titans facing each other silently like monsters from a mythical tale.

Mikasa, at the moment, only felt rage boiling inside her body. She had cut Pieck out of her titan earlier, her anxious sobs only making her want to shut her up even more. "Please..." Pieck pleaded, her head turned low. Mikasa just raised her chin with the sharp point of her blade, making a small trickle of blood run across her neck. Pieck hissed in pain while Mikasa's eyes were dark and unforgiving.

"Tell me," Mikasa began coldly, completely ignoring the rampaging titans all around her, "why should I have mercy for you when your only intent is to wipe us all out?" Mikasa's question was dripping with venom. When Pieck failed to answer, a snarl appeared on Mikasa's

face. Like a whirling hurricane, she slashed her other sword downwards straight on Pieck's left shoulder joint. The sharp steel sliced through her flesh and tendons easily, severing her arm from her body. Pieck let out a blood-curling shriek, wailing loudly as blood spewed out of her gaping wound.

Intense pain radiated through her entire being, her vision going blurry as she threatened to pass out right then and there. However, Mikasa would have none of that. She stepped on the wound roughly with her foot, making Pieck shriek even louder. However, the increased pressure kept Pieck from passing out as her healing factor slowly kicked in, causing steam to rise from her wound. "Aren't we nothing more than Devils that need to be eradicated?" Mikasa asked, moving her foot over the wound to inflict even more pain on her. "Just because we live on Paradis Island. Yet, you don't know *anything* about us." Mikasa's words were piercing as Pieck continued to scream and wail in absolute agony.

It was only when she heard a humongous crash and a powerful tremor that she stopped. Mikasa gasped, recognizing what it must have been. *"That could have only been Jean. But that means..."* she realized with growing horror. Did the beast titan really take out Jean? She was so distracted that she failed to see Pieck's counter-attack. She kicked Mikasa straight in her stomach, completely knocking the wind out of her. Mikasa let out a startled gasp as she clutched her belly, momentarily losing all of her strength and giving Pieck the opportunity to push her off of her. Mikasa fell flat on her butt and before she could react, Pieck had already disappeared into the huge cloud of smoke all the mindless titans rampaging about created. She cursed under her breath, preparing herself to set chase after Pieck, however, a ten-meter-class rudely blocked her path by stomping his large feet in front of her. It grinned dumbly, seeing an easy target as it slowly reached down with his hand to grab Mikasa.

"I don't have time for this!" Mikasa thought, annoyed with the giant as she easily avoided his 'attack'. The titan continued to stare at his hand dumbly, not comprehending how his prey had managed to

escape his clutches. Mikasa put him out of his misery by simply slicing his nape, making him fall down with a loud crash of his lifeless body.

When Mikasa landed, another curse escaped her. She somehow managed to let Pieck escape, which meant only bad news for them. She wanted to kick herself for being distracted so easily, but she knew now was not the time. She hummed to herself, debating if she should regroup or continue her assault on the mindless titans. However, before she could make a decision, a voice she recognized all too well shouted out to her.

"Mikasa!"

Turning her head, she saw none other than Levi approach her from the sky with his vertical maneuvering equipment. His face looked as stoic as always, but a sense of urgency was present as well. When he landed beside her, he pointed his blade toward where the smoke and dust seemingly spread as if something had traveled through it at high velocity. Mikasa could only guess it either had to be Sasha's potent bolts or the beast titan's tendency to use rocks as a weaponized form of assault. She really hoped it was the former, but from the look on Levi's face, she knew it was the latter.

"Jean failed to take down the beast titan," Levi said. "I'm sure you heard that loud crash not too long ago. Not much later, I heard a titan shift again and we were assaulted with huge chunks of rocks. I can only assume Jean fought him into a stalemate and then he managed to escape," Levi deduced.

Mikasa nodded, noting that his reasoning made a lot of sense. She hoped that was the case because it most likely meant Jean was still alive. "How are the others doing?" Mikasa asked, now seeing another barrage of rocks being thrown randomly into the smoke. That confirmed it was definitely the doing of the beast titan.

"I ordered them to retreat for now," Levi informed her. "Remember what Eren told us about being Ackerman's?"

Mikasa nodded her head, on the outside being deadly serious, but on the inside smiling fondly. Eren had taken his time to explain her heritage to her, using the tattoo on her wrist to make it even more clear to her. Honestly, it was still pretty mind-numbing to her, but to know she was using the powers of the titans in a way to take down these humongous, man-eating giants continued to amaze her. It did explain why Levi and she were so skilled and prodigious in dealing with these titans. It came so natural to her that she didn't even think about it. "I do," she said at last, narrowing her eyes while looking at the general direction the rocks were being thrown from.

"Good." Levi nodded his head. "It's our responsibility to take down the beast titan. Together, he won't stand a chance."

Mikasa wanted to agree with Levi, but another thunderous strike of lighting hitting the earth made her realize the cart was running loose once more as well. She sighed and shook her head instead. "You focus on the beast titan. I will take down the cart titan. This time, she won't get away."

Mikasa saw that Levi wanted to ask further what had happened, but in the end, he stayed silent and simply nodded his head. "Very well. I shall deal with the beast titan then." He shot one of his hooks into a random mindless titan to propel himself away and toward the beast titan to face off against him.

That left Mikasa alone once more. Though, she had a very good inkling where the cart titan was at the moment. Namely, right beside the beast titan. She knew that taking on the beast and cart titan at once was going to be a challenge even for Levi, so without thinking twice, she activated her own vertical maneuvering equipment and flew after Levi to aide him.

Zeke eyed the battlefield from a perspective point of view with an angry snarl on his face. Half of his mindless titans had already perished, and Pieck was nowhere to be found. "*Don't tell me these devils got to her,*" he thought, fearing the worst. In the distance, he

could still see the supposed attack titan masterfully defending the female titan. There was no doubt in Zeke's mind that he was the brain behind the entire operation against him. *"That colossal titan did a number on me,"* Zeke noted, most of his limbs being completely numb while his healing factor worked overtime. He desperately needed to shift soon, and since he saw that he was losing the battle very quickly, he decided to play a bit riskier. *"I need to take down those soldiers with the flying contraptions first, then I can shift my efforts to those other titans,"* he reasoned.

Growling lowly, he bit down on the skin of his wrist, having healed enough to activate his beast titan once more. A powerful bolt of yellow lightning descended from the heavens towards him, causing flesh and fur to sprout all around him along with a dreadful torrent of steam. Once fully transformed and with his advanced eye-sight, he easily spotted three of the soldiers through the smoke, huddling close to each other. He recognized them as the two captains of the soldiers and one of the females. *"Perfect. If I can take them out, that would really put a dent into their morale,"* he thought sadistically. He didn't have any big chunks of rocks around that he could throw, so he'd had to do with the earth around him.

Slowly, Zeke dug his big claws into the ground, scooping up random rocks that were buried underneath. He knew it wasn't ideal, but it was better than nothing. He glared and cocked his arm backward, and then threw the objects with lethal velocity and deadly accuracy at his targets. His throw was spot on and the only reason he didn't shred all three of them like a Swiss cheese was that a random titan blocked most of his attack amidst its mindless tantrum. *"Shit!"* Zeke cursed, *"I'll just have to hit him with my next throw then!"*

Like he was a well-oiled machine, Zeke extended his attack by shifting his weight to his other foot. While his other arm was still in a throwing motion, he spun around so his left arm cocked behind his body. It resulted in him using his own momentum to attack very quickly after his initial throw. Like before, his attack had so much velocity that the stones whizzed through the air like they were on fire.

Zeke was sure that this time, there was no escaping his assault. However, as if they possessed god-like reflexes, they all ducked simultaneously and avoided his attack.

Zeke hissed and narrowed his eyes as he saw them scatter around with their flying contraptions. He couldn't follow them anymore as he lost sight of them in the thick clouds of dust. *"That was a golden opportunity I just wasted,"* he realized, frowning at his failure. He could just throw rocks into the smoke and commotion randomly, but he was sure that would do more damage to his titans than the soldiers he was trying to pinpoint. *"It's like finding a needle in a haystack,"* he thought, only the haystack was his property that he was setting on fire in hopes of finding the needle sooner before all of it had burned down completely.

Zeke shook his head mentally. Maybe he did have to target the attack and female titans. However, before he could come to a final decision, the earth-shattering yellow lightning of a titan shifting close by caught his attention. Zeke tensed his muscles, being prepared for anything, only to relax and feel relief wash over him at seeing that it was none other than Pieck. She ran to his side rather urgently, the panic clear on her face.

"Pieck, what happened? Are you all right?" Zeke questioned. It seemed she just came out of a really close encounter herself.

A low growl escaped her titan's mouth. "These soldiers are by no means ordinary," Pieck said darkly. "It's like they've trained months in advance for us, perfectly countering everything we throw at them. And then there are those weird titan shifters. Nothing of this makes any sense whatsoever."

Zeke understood the frustration in Pieck's voice perfectly. He'd like to get some answers too. However, in order to accomplish that, they needed to take down their opponents and fast. They didn't have much time to come up with a coherent plan of attack, though. In the distance, they saw a single soldier approach them, followed very quickly by another.

"Are they going to attack us head-on?" Pieck questioned incredulously. It almost seemed ludicrous, but there was definitely no back-up for them anywhere in sight.

Zeke grumbled. "Let's not underestimate them. We've seen what they are capable of. Let's hit them with everything that we got!" Preparing, he scooped up two big handfuls of dirt and with a mighty roar, threw it at the Ackerman's with every intent to kill them.

And that's it for this chapter people! I know I said this was going to be the final part of this arc, but I was mistaken. I hope you guys don't mind. :P So did you like it, love it, hate it? Review please! I love to read all of them! :D Next chapter Zeke and Pieck vs Mikasa and Levi! Hope to see you then! :D

~Syrup

Vs Zeke and Pieck: Ackerman Instinct

Sorry for the delay, people! Here's the final chapter of this arc! Massive shout-outs goes to my good friend ARCEUS-master for editing this. As always, I appreciate it! :D On with the story!

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

At the moment-while the mindless titans were loudly raging on behind him in their struggle against his side's titan shifters-the only thing on Levi Ackerman's mind were his opponents in front of him, imposingly standing further up ahead in the distance. He scoffed internally when he noticed the Cart Titan joining up with the Beast Titan once again, as he was aware that would make things infinitely more difficult. Zeke's long-range offensive prowess combined with Pieck's speed and agility at close quarters combat were something that Eren had thoroughly warned them about. Nevertheless, he didn't let this deter him whatsoever. His senses were sharp and his focus unbreakable as he rapidly soared through the air and approached the pair with his vertical maneuvering equipment. Only then did he notice that Mikasa was right behind him. She'd apparently figured out the Cart Titan would be here as well.

" *Perfect timing,*" Levi thought with the faintest of smiles. He knew that together they would stand a much bigger chance of taking them down. Being Ackerman gave them that advantage, after all. Not thinking about all the setbacks that they had experienced so far in this battle, Levi continued onwards. After all, this operation was supposed to be an easy and quick ambush which should have ended with Zeke's and Pieck's immediate capture, but instead, it had collapsed into an all-out chaotic scuffle.

Finally, both the Cart and Beast Titan seemed to get out of their stupor. Levi figured they hadn't expected two lone soldiers charging at them like they were on a suicide mission. Levi noticed the Beast Titan's features turn into a murderous snarl as he reached down and scooped up two handfuls of dirt and rocks. "*There it is,*" Levi thought as his eyes narrowed, mentally preparing himself. His expression turned deadly serious while all his muscles tensed in anticipation. "Mikasa!" he shouted, closely watching as Zeke cocked his arm back intimidatingly. "Stay close!"

Not a moment later, Zeke violently swung his arm forward, releasing a lethal scattershot barrage of projectiles in their general direction. He didn't even need to be accurate with his aim, his attack covered such a wide area that he'd destroy whatever was in his way in a hundred-meter range. Despite this, Zeke's throw was still impeccable. Rocks of all shapes and sizes whizzed toward Levi and Mikasa with so much velocity they seemed to sizzle in the air like rapid gunfire. There was no way they could dodge them all, even with their incredible mobility thanks to their vertical maneuvering equipment. However, that's not what they had in mind to begin with.

Eren had extensively trained them for this exact scenario. He had honed their reflexes and speed while using the vertical maneuvering equipment to such inhuman levels that their movements were almost impossible to follow with the naked eye. As such, when the first few rocks began to reach Levi, his pupils shrank on reflex and both of his arms-which were tightly holding his blades-whirled in front of his body like a tornado, causing him to turn into a spinning blur. Most of the rocks shot at him were sliced and turned to nothing but dust while the bigger ones were deflected away and continued to travel into another trajectory. Since Mikasa was close behind him, he covered her almost perfectly, making it so she only had to defend herself against the occasional large rock that Levi opted to dodge instead.

They worked together like a well-oiled machine, with not a single movement wasted and not a single mistake occurring throughout

their defensive maneuver. The two Ackerman created a mini-sandstorm of dust which they appeared out off like a pair of desert spirits once the rocks stopped coming their way. Yet, despite their extremely clever tactic, they didn't come out of the attack unscathed. Since a lot of the projectiles hurled their way were too minuscule to block, Levi was still pelted all over. He gritted his teeth and clicked his tongue, blood slowly seeping out of multiple wounds and staining his face, while his uniform was covered in thousands of tiny tatters. Mikasa, luckily, looked a lot better than he did; she only had a few cuts here and there. Ignoring the pain all over his body, Levi propelled himself forward faster, making a sharp right turn while Mikasa did the complete opposite. This ensured the Beast Titan couldn't target both of them with his next throw.

Meanwhile, Zeke couldn't believe what he was seeing, but based on the confidence behind their reckless frontal assault, he had already assumed they would've survived his attack from the start. "*These are definitely no ordinary soldiers,*" he thought incredulously, eying them as they split up in separate directions. He growled in frustration and without noticing, tightened his fist to the point he accidentally pulverized the ammo in his other hand into nothing but dust. "*Oh,*" he thought and cursed to himself. "*I should be more careful.*" He noticed that Pieck was slightly nervous as their female adversary swiftly approached them from the right, closest to where she was.

"You're right. We shouldn't underestimate them. Be careful, Zeke. I've seen what the girl can do firsthand, never mind that the guy blocked most of your attack just now," Pieck growled in warning, getting low to the ground and tensing all of her muscles like a wild animal about to pounce. Zeke harrumphed, focusing instead on the slightly-wounded soldier who was approaching him on his left. He could see his ragged cape billowing behind him in the wind while his face was stained red with blood. However, no fear was present on his face whatsoever; only an icy-cold determination that sent a shiver down Zeke's spine. "*Could they be...?*" he thought with slowly-widening eyes and a growing sense of realization and dread.

Once his opponent was within range, Zeke roared and thrust his long arm forward, extending the claws at his fingertips like deadly spears to shred the incoming Levi into bloody pieces. As expected, Levi dodged the attack easily by shooting the hooks of his vertical maneuvering equipment down into the ground and going low in a seamless maneuver. *"Just as I thought!"* Zeke smirked triumphantly. In one swift motion, he swept his other arm horizontally, his sharp claws slicing one of the steel cables of Levi's equipment and snapping it. Any other soldier would've lost control and fallen to the ground haplessly. Unfortunately for Zeke, Levi wasn't just any other soldier. He was Humanity's Strongest, and the Beast Titan was about to find that out the hard way.

Levi let out a loud grunt as he lost control for just a split second, and near-instantly recovered by unhooking the still functioning part of his vertical maneuvering equipment and shooting it into the Beast Titan's leg, deftly breaking his fall by changing his trajectory into a more favorable one. He still crashed to the ground, but he was able to roll multiple times to soften the impact and use his extra momentum into his favor.

" *What... !?* " Zeke hissed in complete alarm, unable to do anything but watch in shock.

With his blades still drawn, Levi lunged forwards and sliced forward in an X-pattern at Zeke's left ankle. The sharp steel ripped through the Beast Titan's flesh and tendons like they were nothing, severing his ankle from the rest of his body with a gush of steam and boiling blood that splattered unto the ground below them with a sickening squelch. Zeke could only give a yelp as his clumsy torso and sometimes awkward weight distribution failed him, causing him to fall on his side. The crash was immense and left Zeke disoriented for a couple of crucial seconds. He cursed under his breath, and having completely lost track of where Levi was, Zeke quickly hardened his titan's nape on reflex, coating it with a layer of dense crystal-like material to ensure he would not be defeated so easily.

Meanwhile, Pieck wasn't faring any better. Her animalistic instincts screamed at her to charge and bite Mikasa in half the moment she was within range. So, that was exactly what she did. Hoping to use her speed and agility to catch Mikasa off-guard, she suddenly leaped forward and opened her massive beak-like jaws wide. While the Cart Titan was easily the weakest of all the titan shifters, it did have the most endurance of them all. Not to mention well-developed leg muscles that made her able to jump like a frog with surprising nimbleness. It was scary how quick she could be in close-quarters, and it seemed Mikasa hadn't entirely anticipated that.

Mikasa's advantageous mobility thanks to her vertical maneuvering equipment combined with her inhuman reflexes were the only reasons why she wasn't reduced to a bloody smear in Pieck's jaws. Mikasa gritted her teeth as she shifted her body weight and posture sideways and released a potent burst of gas from the canister on her back via the switches on the handles of her swords, with her body movement being so abrupt the sudden change in trajectory hurt her sides somewhat. However, she was more than glad she managed to evade Pieck's large open maw snapping at her. An intimidating crunch-like sound reverberated through the area as the Cart Titan bit down on nothing but thin air.

Pieck, however, didn't give Mikasa any time to recover. She swiped one of her arms-claws extended menacingly-in a downwards arc with blinding-fast speed in the direction where Mikasa was going, making sure that she had no way of dodging it whatsoever. Mikasa's eyes widened as she realized this with growing horror. She had to defend herself quickly or else she'd still end sliced up into multiple bloody pieces. On a purely instinctual reaction in speeds worthy of an Ackerman, she whirled around so she was facing upward, blades drawn and crossed in front of her as a makeshift shield. Pieck's claws loomed over her in what looked like in slow-motion, but in reality, it was only a fraction of a second. Mikasa gave a war cry as she thrust both blades forward and met Pieck's claws head-on.

A resounding clang echoed loudly all around Mikasa as claws met steel, making her ears ring painfully. She hoped her blades would go straight through Pieck's attack, but the force of her strike was pitiful compared to the power the Cart Titan was able to put behind her attack. She gasped in pain when both her blades broke on impact, the force of the hit slamming her down roughly to the ground. She was lucky all of Pieck's claws broke on impact as well, otherwise there wouldn't have been much left of her.

The Cart Titan growled as the momentum of her earlier leap led her away from her target. However, it only gave Mikasa a few extra seconds to act. The moment Pieck landed on the ground, she quickly spun around-smoothly and efficiently-in one deft movement and lunged at Mikasa once again. Mikasa gritted her teeth, barely recovering from her rather painful fall before she was staring death into the eyes once again. Now, she was acting on pure instinct and that fact alone made her muscles move blindingly fast. Mikasa replaced her broken blades with brand-new ones from the large metallic holsters at her sides and then dived forward with a deafening scream, straight into Pieck's open maw.

Pieck's eyes widened incredulously. *"Don't try it! I'm a lot faster than you!"* She thought to herself, growling from deep within her titan. Time seemed to slow down to a crawl as Mikasa lunged towards the Cart Titan's open jaws. The moment Pieck calculated Mikasa would be passing right between her massive teeth, she smirked and closed her titan's mouth with immense force. *"I win."*

In another inhuman reaction, the moment Pieck's jaws began close down on her, Mikasa pressed the switches in her blade's handles, releasing a potent gush of gas that propelled her forward, moving past the Cart Titan's teeth in an instant.

The last thing Pieck expected when she snapped her jaws shut around Mikasa was for her to completely dodge her teeth and end up inside of her mouth. As such, Mikasa's razor-sharp blades pierced through Pieck's palate and shot straight out of the back of her skull. Pieck hissed in alarm and desperately tried to swallow Mikasa

whole. However, Mikasa resisted the sickening pull of the muscles at the back of Pieck's mouth by holding on firmly to her blades, which were still lodged into the Cart Titan's cranium. With another fierce battle cry, Mikasa pulled one of her blades back, which was now covered in boiling-hot blood, before thrusting it forward again, stabbing Pieck through her palate once more.

Pieck cursed loudly, the obvious damage to her titan's brain making her lose functionality in her limbs. She thrashed and shook her head around harshly in an attempt to make Mikasa lose her grip so she could swallow her whole. *"I can't believe it, just who and what are these soldiers!? I have to get rid of her or..."* Pieck couldn't finish her thought as a very sharp pain exploded through her chest and left shoulder. Mikasa had retracted her blade amidst being completely disoriented and successfully stabbed it at the back of the Cart Titan's throat, slicing the flesh through the back of her neck and piercing her real body. Pieck let out a loud shriek of pain, completely losing sense of her surroundings and control of her titan. Seeing that she had finally hit Pieck's body, Mikasa twisted her blade around savagely to further wound her.

A great sense of desperation and panic overwhelmed Pieck as her own blood pooled in her destroyed lung cavity, giving her the feeling that she was drowning while coughing up heaps of it in a frantic attempt to breathe. She hadn't even noticed that her Cart Titan had helplessly collapsed onto the ground, spasming pitifully as her healing factor did its best to aide her and keep her alive. *"No... Please..."* Pieck thought, her eyes as wide as saucers while still coughing up her own blood. She had no idea where she was anymore, only that her vision turned blurry the moment she felt someone cut her titan's nape open, effectively getting her out of her titan and leaving her completely defeated.

Pieck wanted to fight the growing dizziness and stay awake, afraid she might never wake up again, but the moment she closed her eyes, the pain and panic started to fade as she fell into a state of sweet unconsciousness.

The moment Zeke had focused on hardening his nape as a defensive measure, it had been all over for him. He surely thought that Levi would try to end the battle as quickly as possible and thus zero in on his nape, especially when he had fallen down and was left vulnerable. As such, he never expected Levi to attack his head instead. The extremely sharp blades pierced through his skull almost too easily. Like he was an overripe banana, his head split open in two with a disgusting gush of boiling blood, rendering most of his senses and all of his movements completely useless. *"What the... Did he... expect me to do that!?"* Zeke hissed, completely petrified while widening his eyes almost comically. He was basically a sitting duck at this point, and it didn't take Levi much more time to hack and slash his way around his titan's hardened nape. Splatters of blood stained the Beast Titan's brown fur as Levi mercilessly slashed away, ending it with a wide and potent slash that ripped Zeke out of his titan with a loud scream.

Boiling-hot blood and steam rose everywhere around them as Levi harrumphed at Zeke's defeated and battered form. His healing factor had slowed down to a crawl; courtesy of Jean already doing massive damage to him in their earlier fight. *"So, this is the almighty Beast Titan,"* Levi thought with a disgusted grimace as he looked down at him, keeping both of his blades interlocked against Zeke's neck.

"Who... Who *are* you guys?" Zeke wheezed while blood slowly trickled past his lips and down his chin. He winced when he felt the sharp edges of Levi's blade cut into the soft skin tissue of his neck.

"You're not much in a position to be asking any questions, Zeke Yeager," Levi answered, his bloodied expression making him look more like a serial killer than anything else. "I have to hand it to you, though. You made it extremely difficult for us," he admitted offhandedly, his attention now diverting to Mikasa and Pieck. He cursed and briefly questioned Mikasa's sanity when he saw her leap straight into Pieck's maw who snapped it shut an instant later. He gritted his teeth, only for him to gasp when he saw both of her blades pierce through the Cart Titan's skull from within. *"That's... pretty*

clever, actually. Using that thing's odd mouth shape to her advantage," he admitted to nobody in particular.

Zeke chuckled. "Beastly Instincts," he revealed. "Not that it matters much anymore. I've lost and by the looks of it, I won't live for much longer anyway."

Levi didn't spare Zeke as much of a glance as he shifted the angle of his blades and thrust them down, cutting off both of his arms, followed quickly by both of his legs with another efficient slice of his blades. The loud screams of pure agony from Zeke's mouth were like music to Levi's ears. "That was for those rocks you threw at us. Don't go anywhere now, I have to help my teammate." Levi shot off in the direction of the Cart Titan, who was getting stabbed repeatedly with one of Mikasa's blades from the inside of her mouth.

"If she keeps that up, she might even defeat her without my help," Levi thought, very impressed with her improvisation. *"Best to not take any chances, though."* He noticed how Pieck had lost functionality of her limbs after a particularly potent stab through her skull and crashed to the ground, giving Levi the perfect opportunity to finish her off.

He could hear Pieck's wails of pain and agony-which were equally as melodious to him as Zeke's had been earlier-clear as day when she started to shake her head around like a dog in a vain attempt to get Mikasa to lose her grip on her swords, only for her to stab her straight through her neck. *"That must've pierced her straight through her chest,"* Levi deduced, seeing the end of Mikasa's blade covered in a thick layer of non-boiling, clearly-human blood. Deciding to put Pieck out of her misery, he silently sliced her nape open in a single, swift pass, ejecting her out of her titan. Levi tsk'ed, unimpressed as Pieck lost consciousness fairly quickly afterward.

Not much later, Mikasa freed herself from the lifeless body of the Cart Titan that was quickly going up in smoke. She was breathing raggedly, her eyes hazy while holding on to her swords for dear life. Levi perked a brow, but otherwise didn't question it. Instead, he gave

her a hand to help her get up. "I've defeated the Beast Titan," Levi stated matter-of-factly, seeing that Mikasa was all right and didn't suffer any lethal wounds. She was just experiencing a shock reaction. He knew that'd wear off.

Mikasa nodded her head and grabbed his outstretched hand. In the distance, she could see that Eren, Sasha and Connie were finishing off the remaining mindless titans, meaning the battle was as good as over. "Let's take Pieck and Zeke with us then and join the others," she responded shakily, her heart still beating a mile a minute. "I am sure Eren would love to know how Zeke anticipated our ambush so flawlessly."

Levi snorted. "He was talking something about his Beastly Instincts, as if it was a sixth sense that warned him from the upcoming danger. It seems plausible, but I'd rather ask Eren to make sure it's the truth. Moreover, we have some other, much bigger problems we have to discuss as soon as possible."

Mikasa could take an estimated guess of what Levi was talking about. Now that some of the Marleyan warships had witnessed the brutal battle that took place, their cover of stealth had been completely blown. The crews of these ships would undoubtedly report to Marley what had transpired and let them know Paradis Island was ready for war, and then it'd be a race against the clock.

"I'm sure Eren will come up with a plan, if he hasn't already," Mikasa replied evenly, the admiration for the boy palpable in her voice.

Levi simply nodded his head as he went over to where Zeke had been screaming in pain just a minute ago; he probably had lost consciousness by now as well. Levi looked down at the defeated Zeke with a disdainful expression. "Well, as much as I want to kill you right here, Eren apparently has other plans for you. Consider yourself lucky," Levi said as he grabbed what was left of Zeke and carried him on his shoulder. Mikasa did the same with Pieck, only she carried her on her back. Mikasa's revolted expression clearly showed how much she wanted to kill her as well, but she refrained

for the time being. A quick nod to Levi was all that she needed to give him before the two used their vertical maneuvering equipment to head toward Eren's general direction.

Eren sighed internally, looking over the smoke and steam-shrouded battlefield. The harbor Marley had built was completely destroyed, never mind the surrounding area all around it which had now been reduced to a tattered landscape. He'd just finished off the last of the mindless titans. Miraculously, nobody of his squad got killed or seriously injured; the only worrisome case was Armin. He would probably be out of commission for the next six months. *"It could've been worse,"* he reassured himself, pinching the bridge of his nose.

Right now, he was meeting up with his team. Most were wounded, but still standing strong. Levi and Mikasa had haphazardly tossed before him the unconscious and mutilated bodies of Zeke and Pieck, as if it was up to Eren to pass judgement upon them. "So, Eren," Levi asked him neutrally while he had his arms crossed, "what will we be doing now? In just a few days, Marley will be aware that Paradis isn't as unknowing about the outside world nor as regressive and helpless as they had once thought it was."

It was a serious issue, Eren realized, but not something that was impossible to overcome. "Right now, we will stick to the original plan," he said firmly. "We make contact with the Azumabito, form an alliance, build up our defenses around the sea and attack Marley as quickly as possible."

Everybody present knew it was still a solid plan. The fact Marley was in the middle of a war with the surrounding nations and had just lost another two titans meant they could not afford anymore adversaries. Moreover, with the fact they would get access to some of the latest technology thanks to the Azumabito, they would also show the other nations they weren't the Devils Marley's relentless propaganda made them out to be. *"It's not like Willy Tybur is in any position right now to hold an epic speech and make me the enemy of the entire world,"* Eren thought, shaking away those dark memories.

"While I do agree with you that it's the best course of action," Erwin mused, "what about our brethren? If Marley knows all of the titans have fallen into our hands except for the War Hammer, then what's stopping them from killing all the Eldians in the interment zones?"

It was a fair question, and something Eren was the most anxious about becoming a reality. However, he wasn't the Founding Titan for nothing. Freeing Liberio was still one of his top priorities, and he knew exactly how he was going to manage that. "You don't have to worry about that one. I'll personally make sure not a single Eldian soul will be lost because of this." Eren spoke with so much confidence that he left no doubts in the mind of his friends and his teammates about this statement.

"Alright, we will trust you with that task, then," Levi responded, now pointing one of his blades to their prisoners. "But, what about them?"

Eren breathed in loudly and looked at the unconscious pair with a thoughtful expression, knowing that Zeke was still of the opinion that euthanizing all of the Eldians would be the best way to go. However, just because that was his opinion right now didn't mean it couldn't change. He saw no reason to kill either of them for the time being, especially since Pieck had worked together with some of his teammates in the past—well, the past for Eren, at least.

"I will extract their titans as a precautionary measure; however, we will not kill them. They might not agree with our point of view, but that doesn't mean we can't change their minds. They could be very valuable allies if we say the right things to them. And if not, they won't be able to do much without their titans once they're locked up," Eren reasoned, now looking out over the sea in the general direction where he knew Marley lay over the horizon.

Everybody became silent as they all followed Eren's gaze and stared out toward the sea as well. They'd come so far, but they all knew that the final and most difficult hurdle was just about to begin.

And that's it for this arc, people! Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Please leave a review! Reviews make my day a little brighter! Next chapter the final arc: the battle against Marley! Until then. :3

~Syrup

The calm before the storm

Final arc of this story, people! Hope you guys are ready and have been enjoying the ride so far. :3 Shout-out to my good friend Arceus-MASTER for editing this chapter. Enjoy! :D

"Titans" Speech

"Titans" Thoughts

Located on a vast and sprawling continent in the far north was the huge and powerful nation called Marley. Long ago, it had begun expanding its roots through the colonialization of smaller nations after obtaining the power of the titans. Right after The Great Titan War, they started to oppress the Eldians and strengthened their military might to gain more land. Through clever lies, brainwashing, and relentless propaganda, they managed to change the truth surrounding Eldia's history when King Fritz fled to the island of Paradis so they could gain the sympathy of the Eldians still left behind on Marley.

This allowed Marley to become the most intimidating and powerful nation in the world at the time. They promised any Eldians that they'd become honorary Marleyans if they joined the military and used the power of the titans against the surrounding nations. Over the span of decades, this resulted in vast territorial gains and Marley becoming notorious for militarism. Unfortunately, while the power of the titans was great, technological advancements from neighboring countries were catching up to it very soon.

It was why, at this moment, commander Theo Magath was sitting across the most influential family in all of Marley. The look on his face was serious, his lips were twisted into an almost perpetual

scowl while his eyebrows were furrowed. He had his arms crossed over each other while waiting impatiently for the host to speak up.

The aforementioned host was sitting across his desk, idly stirring a silver spoon into his porcelain cup which contained lemon tea. When he was done, he tapped the rim of the cup with his spoon so he didn't spill any excess tea, which made a pleasant dinging sound, and then placed it on the matching saucer underneath the cup. Magath could never understand how anybody could enjoy tea; he was an avid advocate for coffee, not whatever this weak leaf brew was supposed to be. He ignored it in favor of the host offering him a kind smile. Willy Tybur-head of the powerful Tybur family-was first and foremost, a family man. He didn't really like politics and rarely partook actively in any of them. As such, he was seldom seen by the public and spent most of his time inside his luxurious estate.

Now, though, things had changed rapidly. Ever since Marley had sent four of their titan shifters into Paradis Island to retrieve the coveted Founding Titan and hopefully nullify the threat of King's Fritz warning to flatten the earth, Willy had become a little more politically active. Even though Marley was an independent country that openly oppressed Eldians, Willy was still its true leader, hiding inside the shadows because of the horrible deeds his ancestors had committed in the past. As an honorary Marleyan, he lived without any restrictions and, in turn, let Marley do whatever it pleased.

Willy Tybur assumed it was for the best. If all his kin had to suffer, then so be it. They all deserved it after brutally oppressing Marley in the past. However, he couldn't help but show his interest when Marley decided to launch this stealth operation against Paradis Island. He knew that Marley was running out of valuable resources due to the war it waged against the Mid-East allied countries. Paradis Island possessed an invaluable trove of both natural and mineral resources. Critically, it was full of oil, coal, iron ore, and gold. If Marley managed to get its hands on the Founding Titan and take control of Paradis Island and its resources, it meant the Mid-Eastern

countries would stand no chance in a lengthy war of attrition, even with their technological advancements.

Willy's interest had peaked a few days ago. Both the Beast and Cart titans had been sent towards Paradis Island to do a full check-up on the progress of the young warriors. The absolute carnage that took place on Paradis Island immediately after had stunned the entire nation of Marley. From the three of Marley's most powerful and biggest battle-ready warships that made the journey, only two managed to return, with one sustaining heavy damage. The other had apparently sunk on its way back to Marley after a severe engine malfunction. The explosion that followed left no survivors on that ship. Traumatized soldiers scrambled off of the remaining ships like they had seen the Devil himself, with the story they told spreading panic throughout the entire country.

"Commander Magath," Willy said kindly, "please take me through all of the details *again*, if you will." He calmly brought his steaming-hot cup of tea to his lips and took a small sip. The bitter beverage-which was acutely sweetened due to the sugar cubes he had put inside of it-did him well. He had to assess the situation quickly if he wanted to retaliate fittingly.

Commander Magath grumbled and leaned forward on his chair. "An ambush," he muttered. "Zeke's instinct was apparently right. Both the Beast and Cart Titan faced heavy opposition the moment they set foot on Paradis Island. From official reports, it says that multiple soldiers saw at least three enemy titan shifters-which probably means our young warriors are dead and their titans lost-and an elite squad of flying soldiers."

Willy's kindness never left his face despite the somber news, though the seriousness in his tone of voice revealed how precarious the situation truly was. "Do we know the status of Zeke and Pieck?" he questioned, folding his hands together on his desk.

Magath shook his head once. "Negative. The battle was still ongoing in full force when the ships left. It could be that they managed to

defeat their opponents and retrieve back the titans which were lost, or they could have suffered the same fate. If the latter is true, then we're in big trouble," he replied gruffly.

Despite the terrible outlook, Willy stayed positively calm. "These 'Flying Soldiers' that you mentioned, are they anything that we should be concerned about?" he asked with genuine interest. He couldn't really picture anybody flying without the use of a blimp or the recently-developed 'flying boats' that Marley had been testing, though the latter were far from a finished product capable of being safely piloted and used for either cargo transport or battle.

"I think they might be a big problem. From the limited info we have, they use some sort of gas to propel themselves forward and attack with blades, but we don't know how they manage to fly through the air and for how long. It all sounds very high tech and contradicts severely with what we know of Paradis Island," Magath answered, suppressing a sigh. He didn't understand how Paradis Island suddenly possessed technology that could rival the Mid-Eastern nations, let alone how they'd known about their plan to retrieve the Founding Titan and counter it near-perfectly.

"These are definitely some worrisome developments indeed," Willy responded idly, mulling things over. Out of nowhere, Paradis Island had gone from being a side-project to the most threatening country to Marley. "We need to have good faith in Zeke and Pieck," he said, "but, on the off-chance that they've been defeated, we also need to prepare for the worst. We can ill afford to lose more of our military right now to Paradis Island if we want to win against the Mid-Eastern nations."

Magath nodded his head in understanding. "What do you propose we should do, then?" Though he knew that answer already, he still wanted to hear it from Willy himself. He shifted comfortably in his chair as Willy took another sip from his tea and smiled once more.

"Why, we do what we do best. We'll spread lies about Paradis, strike fear in the surrounding nations, and set up an offensive with the War

Hammer Titan," Willy said casually, almost nonchalantly-so. "There's no reason to be playing coy anymore. Paradis is apparently up-to-date with what has been going on in the world. Now is the right time to forge new allies and crush that little island before it starts to grow into an ugly wound."

Magath couldn't help but let a little smile come across his face. Willy might be an Eldian, but at heart, he was a Marleyan through and through. The man was sly and cunning, something that Magath could appreciate. "It sounds like a plan, albeit a risky one," Magath said. "If Zeke and Pieck do not return within the next week, it means that the War Hammer has to face *all* the other titans at once."

Willy nodded his head, still not alarmed in the slightest. "There's a reason why the War Hammer titan has stayed in the Tybur family for generations and why nobody knows its shifter. It has always been a last resort if situations like these might potentially arise," he revealed mysteriously. "I can assure you that the War Hammer titan possesses abilities that outclass every other titan except for the Founding Titan, of course."

Commander Magath nodded his head in understanding, pleased with the response for now, even though the information he received was limited. "Very well, then. I shall make a note to deliver the news that Paradis Island has awakened from its slumber and that these Devils are threatening to destroy the world to the surrounding nations. I'm sure that will stir up some fear and motive to form alliances with us so that we can neutralize Paradis Island once and for all."

Willy finished his tea and gently placed the cup back on the saucer. "You know what they say, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. We can agree to share the resources on Paradis Island and go from there. I think that will be enough inclination for the other nations to accept our offer."

Commander Magath stood up from his chair. "So long we can crush these Devils into the ground, everything is fine with me." He checked

the time and noticed with some annoyance that it was already past noon. "Forgive me for leaving so abruptly, but I have some other matters to attend to."

Willy waved him off dismissively. "No problem. I need some time to think things through, anyway." With that, Commander Magath left the Tybur's estate while Willy stayed behind in his study. Sighing quietly to himself, Willy assessed the situation. *"The vow to renounce war should still be in place,"* he thought while folding his hands and leaning his chin on them as he rested his elbows on his desk. *"Then how in the world is it possible that Paradis Island had been so prepared for the warriors ?"*

No matter how long Willy thought about it, he couldn't think of anything that would make sense. The people living behind the walls should have been oblivious to the outside world. Yet, as shown by their tech development and their ability to ambush Zeke and Pieck at the coastline, the complete opposite seemed to be true. He was about to stand up to get some fresh air outside-after all, it was a beautiful day and the sunshine would do him well-when the entire world around him seemed to melt and disappear in a flash.

Willy gasped as he was suddenly teleported into an unknown location. He couldn't tell if he had crash-landed or if he had been standing since the beginning, which let an eerie sensation settle on him. Looking around, all he could see was dirt on dried-out and cracked earth in every direction spanning as far as the eye could see. The sky was jet black and filled with twinkling stars, giving a sense of near-infinite space to his surroundings. He couldn't detect any wind, and neither any warmth nor cold.

Willy took a deep breath, trying to assess the situation of what was going on. The reality was strange, as if he just was, which was a pretty odd realization and moment of clarity for him. Then, the scenery shifted slightly as he detected a massive tree standing in the distance. Unnervingly, he wasn't sure if it had been there since the beginning or if it had just spawned. It was plentiful in its roots that seemed to be made of light as if it spread to every corner of the

earth. It shone brilliantly like the sun itself and Willy found himself drawn towards it. He automatically started to walk in its direction until a voice stopped him dead in his tracks.

"Willy Tybur."

Quick as a fox, Willy turned around. A teenager-no older than eighteen years-was staring back at him. Willy didn't recognize him, but what was even more confusing in his mind was that the voice had no possible way of coming from this kid. It was all-surrounding and boomed with authority as if it was from an entity not to be trifled with. This teenager that had suddenly appeared, however, looked completely normal.

"Who are you?" Willy asked cautiously. He had no idea of what was happening. *"Did somebody spike my tea?"* he thought incredulously while the teenager gave him a gentle smile.

"You do not need to worry. We are on completely neutral grounds here. I chose the Coordinate to speak with you as it is the root of all of Eldians past, present, and future." He pointed at the tree in the distance. "The tree of Ygdrassil shows us every Eldian who is alive today. It also allows the bearer of the Founding Titan to take complete control over any Eldian they wish to. Beautiful, isn't she?"

The boy let that sink in for a moment to Willy, who then realized with growing horror that he was speaking to the current holder of the Founding Titan.

"My name is Eren Yeager, by the way, and I represent the voice of Paradis Island on the behalf of her majesties Queen Frieda Reiss and Queen Historia Reiss," Eren revealed diplomatically. "I have brought you here because you are the head of the Tybur family, keeper of the War Hammer Titan, and the current leader of the country of Marley." He said this so casually and with so much authority that Willy had trouble believing he was speaking to a teenager at the moment.

After staring at Eren for several long moments and then regaining his faculties, Willy straightened himself and gave Eren a respectful bow. "Eren Yeager, it is a pleasure to make your acquaintance," he said, not unkindly. "The fact you're able to bring me here means that you are the current holder of the Founding Titan," he stated matter-of-factly. Even though Willy was pretty sure about this fact, he still wanted to get confirmation, hence why he mentioned it. A simple nod from Eren proved his deduction to be true. "I assume that you have brought me here to discuss the recent affairs between Marley and Paradis, correct?"

"That is right," Eren responded, idly beckoning Willy to follow him as they moved over the cracked earth towards the almost blinding, divine-looking tree in the distance. "As you may have heard by now, Paradis Island isn't as oblivious anymore about the outside world as it once was. After all, I have made sure of that," he revealed to Willy who had trouble keeping the surprise off of his face.

The tree of Ygdrassil radiated a pleasant warmth as they steadily moved closer towards it. "I'm sure you have a lot of questions on how this is even possible," Eren continued, "but let me just be frank with you." He stopped for a moment, the look on his face stern. "We have successfully defeated all of the titan shifters which you have sent our way. Marcel Galliard, bearer of the Jaw Titan. Annie Leonheart, bearer of the Female Titan. Bertolt Hoover, bearer of the Colossus Titan. Reiner Braun, bearer of the Armored Titan. Pieck Finger, bearer of the Cart Titan. And finally, Zeke Yeager, bearer of the Beast Titan. They have all been neutralized." Eren paused for an ominous couple of seconds.

" *You*, Willy Tybur, are responsible for these attacks. Even though the country of Marley operated independently, you are still her leader. These actions against innocent human lives have been unacceptable and you should atone for the blood that's on your hands," Eren concluded, his voice dangerous.

For the first time, Willy frowned, before he sat down on the ground with his legs crossed, the tree of Ygdrassil perfectly in the

background as if he was an extension of it. "Those are some heavy accusations, Eren Yeager," he stated, letting one of his hands run through the soft dust on the ground, "but if you are sure punishment is in order, then I'm afraid I can do nothing but accept it. So, go ahead," he said, a hint of cockiness in his voice. "You have the Founding Titan, do you not? You can erase me from existence if you so wish."

Eren didn't respond. Instead, he looked at Willy indifferently, the silence so thick you could cut it with a knife. "You and I both know that some families are not affected by the will of the Founding Titan, like the Ackerman clan for example," Eren finally replied, some annoyance present in his voice. "And, while the Tybur family isn't included on that list, the War Hammer Titan has this nifty ability to protect its members from most of what the Founding Titan is capable of." He sat down across Willy.

"Believe me when I say I'd love to kill you and end Marley's horrible oppression of all Eldian lives, but for that to be a reality, we'll have to meet in the real world, and you be sure that when that happens, I'll rip you apart." Venom dripped from every word Eren spat, which made Willy chuckle.

"My, such violent threats. It can't be helped, I suppose. Eldians have always been blood-thirsty. I am sure you know our history well and why I let Marley operate independently in the first place. We deserve it after all the bloodshed and oppression we have done in the past." Willy stood up again and resumed his walk. "Of course, the fact you wanted to talk to me tells me you want to solve this peacefully. What do you propose, Eren Yeager?"

Willy could see that Eren had trouble keeping his cool. After all, the hypocrisy of him living a life of luxury while all his kin suffered was not lost on him. It's exactly what he was hoping for, to get a reaction out of Eren. However, Eren didn't bite and instead continued sternly. "Marley's immediate and unconditional surrender to Paradis Island. We'll install a new government, and make it a constitutional monarchy under the authority of her majesty Frieda Reiss. A peace

treaty will be signed by both parties which includes the liberty of all Eldians as well as an end to all persecution and oppression, and the destruction of all nine titan powers, once and for all."

Now that they were approaching the base of the tree, Willy could see all the individual threads running through its roots like they were veins and arteries. It was simply a stunning sight to look at. "Those are some steep conditions, Mr. Yeager," Willy responded, more interested in the tree of Ygdrassil than anything else. "What if I refuse?"

"If you refuse, I'll simply activate The Rumbling and flatten the entire country of Marley," Eren replied without missing a single beat. "I've been benevolent so far, but my patience has been running thin. I'll give you a month to think about it, Willy Tybur," Eren concluded.

Before Willy could respond, the world seemed to disappear once more in a flash. After a brief spell of disorientation and everything melting into nothingness, he found himself back in his study. Willy clutched his head, his stomach churning a little at the sudden teleportation. Sweat dripped from his brow as Eren's last words ran through his mind over and over again.

"He's right. What's stopping him from activating The Rumbling?" Willy thought, taking his handkerchief out of his pocket to wipe his brow. "If he does that, then the country of Marley is doomed." He sat down and scratched the back of his head anxiously. "But then again..." Willy's panic seemed to dissipate a little as his eyes narrowed, "he'll show the entire world what kind of Devils we truly are if he destroys Marley so savagely. He seems to want to avoid that, otherwise, he wouldn't have pulled me into the Coordinate to talk with me."

Now, Willy's calm demeanor seemed to return on his features. He paced back and forth in his study, deep in thought. *"What were his conditions again? Marley's immediate surrender... Constitutional monarchy... Liberty of all Eldians... Destruction of the nine titan powers..."* Willy rubbed his chin as it started to dawn on him a little.

"He wants to liberate all Eldians, meaning..." An open map spread on a nearby table showing all the internment zones within Marley-particularly Liberio-caught his eye, causing him to walk over to it and run his fingers over it.

" These Eldian lives are important to him," Willy concluded cleverly. *"I can use them as a safety measure. So long as they're under our authority, Eren Yeager won't be using The Rumbling."* He tapped his finger on the map a couple of times. *"The fact he gave me a month to think about it makes me think that he's seeking alliances with surrounding nations. He wants to turn the tides in Paradis' favor and have the world turn on us with the promise of destroying the power of the titans."*

Willy started to pace again. *"However, is that just a bluff or will he really do it? He probably knows that we're at war with the Mid-Eastern nations. The power of the titans is becoming obsolete except when you're the Founding Titan. The question is, would a teenager have the guts to give up so much power willingly?"* Willy grumbled. *"No, Eren Yeager is definitely not a teenager. He probably took the appearance of one to throw me off while inside the Coordinate. Though..."* He observed his desk from the spot where he was pacing back and forth. *"Yeager... is that just a coincidence or is he really related to Zeke? If that's the case, then Zeke's father must have survived his trip to Utopia and gained the Founding Titan somehow."*

Willy nodded to himself contently. *"It would explain how Eren is the current Founding Titan. The fact he's also apparently loyal to 'queen' Frieda and 'queen' Historia means that both are from royal blood, hence why he's able to control the Founding Titan so freely,"* he carried on, formulating a plan.

" I need to share this info with Commander Magath. I believe a slight change of plans is in order."

A long and drawn-out breath escaped Eren's mouth. He was more tired than he remembered being in a long time. Last week had been the most hectic period in his life. From extracting the Beast Titan and the Cart Titan from Zeke and Pieck, to regulating the voyage towards the Azumabito, and then finally confronting Willy Tybur inside the Coordinate. He was spent and was currently sitting inside the royal palace in the inner ring of wall Sina while idly tapping his desk.

The question remained if Willy was going to respond how Eren predicted he was going to. It was a risky plan, but it assured he could save the Eldians living in Marley. His top priority was managing that without the rest of the world declaring war on them. Then, he also had to think about who was going to inherit the Beast Titan and the Cart Titan, as well as how to proceed if Willy did something completely unpredictable.

Right now, though, it was time to call it a day. The afternoon was making way for the evening, with a beautiful twilight settling in and painting the sky with all the warm reds and oranges imaginable. Eren looked out of his window while enjoying the view, reminiscing about the days when he was just a kid without a worry in the world.

He found himself longing for them more often than not nowadays, and he hoped when everything was said and done, he could experience them once more. *"To be finally free,"* he thought while closing his eyes. Eren let the final warm rays of the sun hit his face, however, the tranquility he experienced at the moment was interrupted by a polite knock on the door. He recognized that knock pattern and style any day of the week; it was so integrated into his brain that he didn't even need to turn around to know who it was behind the door.

"You may come in, Mikasa," Eren called out to her sweetly. She opened the door-still clothed in her Survey Corps uniform-and gave him the official salute by pressing one fist against her chest and the other behind her back. On the verge of turning eighteen years old, Mikasa had turned into the beautiful young adult that Eren had

grown to love so much. At his request, she kept her hair long, something that only added to her natural beauty.

"Sir Yeager, sir," Mikasa said to him respectfully. Even though she knew that Eren wouldn't mind if she broke protocol when she was alone with him, she'd rather stay professional. He was still her superior officer, after all. Mikasa patiently waited for him to give her his acknowledgment even though he couldn't keep the steadily-growing smile off of his face.

"At ease, Mikasa," Eren joked playfully, "last time I checked, it's past working hours." He walked around his desk until he was right in front of her. She relaxed herself, her cheeks coloring rosy while a kind smile appeared on her features. Her eyes twinkled like a bright star, reflecting just how head over heels she was for him.

"How did it go?" Mikasa asked him curiously, walking alongside him as Eren left his office. Every day when the evening was setting in, Mikasa would swing by and tell Eren the latest intel they'd gathered. As his right hand, she coordinated the voyage to the Azumabito and made sure Paradis Island was secure against any enemy attacks.

The corridor they walked through was empty, the flicking of the candle lights their only form of illumination. "I'd say it went as well as one would expect," Eren responded with a slight grimace. "Willy Tybur is cunning and the War Hammer Titan formidable. Here's to hope my bluff will scare him enough that he isn't choosing for a straight all or nothing attack on Paradis."

The last thing Eren could afford was an all-out war inside the walls. Not only would countless innocent lives be lost, but he'd also most likely have to activate The Rumbling, at least partly. *"That, in turn, would just prove Marley's propaganda right and turn the entire world against me,"* Eren thought, worry present on his face.

Mikasa grabbed his arm and put hers around it, leaning her body against his while they reached the stairs to go down and leave the building. Eren smiled, his worry slowly melting away. "I'm sure he

won't," Mikasa reassured him. "After all, it'd mean sacrificing a large part of their army and giving up all of Marley's power. They'd basically be at the mercy of the other nations."

This was exactly what Eren was banking on, but hearing it from Mikasa while she was resting her head on his shoulder gave him that extra spark that he really had nothing to worry about. "Thanks, Mikasa," Eren said appreciatively, opening the door to greet the chilly afternoon air. His warm breath made small clouds appear in front of him as the duo walked through the relatively empty streets.

Evening was settling in quickly, the last rays of the sun disappearing over the horizon which covered the streets in gorgeous shades of dark blue. Both Eren and Mikasa stayed silent, just enjoying each other's presence as they walked home. Eren had bought a small but quaint little house inside wall Sina not too long ago. Now that both he and Mikasa were basically adults, they had moved out of their parent's home in Shiganshina. The moment Eren had offered to Mikasa to move in with him, she'd almost threatened to tear up.

Eren loved how intimately she was holding him. It reminded him of when he married her and made love with her for the first time in the old timeline. Her small but powerful physique, yet still so feminine pressed so cozily against his side, her head rubbing against her shoulder while her hair tickled his neck, the soft scent of the cheap soap she *still* used despite being able to use any other soap she liked just because she knew he liked it wafting through his nose.

Eren never wanted to let her go. Moments like these he wished he could experience forever. He gave her a loving glance, which she reciprocated by holding him just a tad tighter. Finally, they reached the front door of their house. Eren was fidgeting to find his key, but before he could complete his quest and open the door, Mikasa had turned him around gently so he was facing her. Her eyes were filled with nothing but love as she looked up at him. She pushed him back until he was leaning against the front door, both of her hands cupping his cheeks.

He was a fair bit taller than her, so, going on her tippy-toes, she closed the distance until her sweet lips pressed softly against his. Eren closed his eyes, wrapping his arms around Mikasa's body and pulling her against him while she deepened the sweet affection. Extreme comfort and warmth radiated through Eren's being, Mikasa's lips feeling heavenly against his. At the moment, he was completely content with the world, knowing full well that this was just the calm before the storm. Nevertheless, he only focused on Mikasa right now, kissing her back gently and exclaiming his love for her, once again.

And there we have it, folks! Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Please review and let me know who should get the Cart Titan and who the Beast titan! Until next time, stay safe! ^^

~Syrup

This is my last war

New chapter is here, people! Sorry for the wait! Enjoy! :3

"Titans!" Speech

"Titans!" Thoughts

The tree of Yggdrasil up-close looked even more impressive than from afar. Even though Willy Tybur had the privilege of appreciating it before-that being exactly one month ago-he now had the opportunity to stand in front of it and really take in its infinite beauty. It was as if the tree itself radiated pure life, the radiance of its roots shining with a warmth that had Willy enraptured. He wanted to reach forward and touch it, but for some reason, he was afraid he might damage or taint it. It was a ludicrous thought. However, it still withheld him from doing so out of respect. His amazement never dwindled, even if the Coordinate he had been teleported into once again seemed devoid of any life.

"It's very pretty, isn't it?" a voice Willy recognized as the current Founding Titan suddenly spoke up. He didn't immediately turn around to face Eren Yeager, a threat to Marley and possibly the entire world if he decided to activate The Rumbling. This time, Willy wasn't startled by the sudden presence of the teenager. After all, Eren had given him a month to think about his proposition, so he wasn't surprised he was meeting up with him within the Coordinate once more after exactly that amount of time had passed. When he eventually did turn around, Willy respectfully bowed to Eren, who looked exactly like how he had appeared to him a month ago.

"Eren Yeager," Willy acknowledged, not unkindly, "it's a pleasure to meet you once again." Willy eyed the tree of Yggdrasil behind him once more. "And yes, it's gorgeous. To think this tree holds the

history of all the Eldians within its roots. It's simply mesmerizing." Willy's voice was soft, almost a whisper while a longing sigh escaped his mouth. "Tell me, Eren Yeager. As the Founding Titan, can you read this tree?"

"I can, to some extent," Eren replied evenly. "To me, the past and the present are clear. However, it's the future where its branches are ever-expanding that I cannot read," he revealed, patiently waiting for what Willy would make of that.

The blond man closed his eyes, humming as if deep in thought. He breathed in deeply and held his breath, before exhaling loudly again. "So, even you can't predict the future, then?"

Eren didn't immediately respond. Instead, he looked at the ever-expanding branches of the great tree as if trying to look into the possible futures that lay ahead. Futures he had avoided by making certain decisions, and unknown futures that were still laying ahead of him. Some were uncertain and others he had experienced before. One thing was for certain in Eren's mind, though. After trying thousands of times, he wasn't going to give up, ever. He was going to liberate the Eldians from the hatred of the world, and in turn, set Ymir free once and for all. "The Founding Titan is powerful, but it isn't omnipotent. If it was, I would have destroyed the power of the titans and ended this nightmare a long time ago."

For some reason, Willy didn't want to believe this was Eren's end goal, but he couldn't detect any deception in his voice whenever he spoke. Still, the blond man didn't buy it. He was wary the Coordinate might mess with his perception of things even though he knew he was protected against the Founding Titan's overwhelming influence by his own sister-Lara Tybur. "It's a shame," Willy muttered, "but even if you could, it would not erase the horrible things our kin did in the past. We bear a heavy guilt that history will never forget."

"That is true," Eren agreed, "but what happened in the past, has happened. There's nothing we can change about that, so it's time we stop letting that define us Eldians for what we are. What we can

change, however, is how we move forward into the future and how future generations of people across the world view us." Eren paused, his expression determined. "Please allow me to save the Eldians. Agree with Marley's immediate surrender, and I'll end this unending cycle of hatred once and for all. The power of the titans will be something of the past, a sin that will be left to be forgotten in history. Marleyans and Eldians will enter an era of prosperity and peace with each other and the surrounding nations."

Willy's eyes became steely as they bore into Eren's with power and strength that would've intimidated anybody. Then, they became soft again. "I'm sorry, Eren Yeager, but we, Eldians, were never meant to be. We deserve to have the hatred of the world fall on us and be eradicated in the process. Therefore, I simply cannot accept your offer."

Eren didn't seem to be fazed by Willy's answer, almost as if he had expected it. "Yes, Willy," Eren replied, "your false and outdated beliefs indeed deserve to have the hatred of the world fall over them. In turn, I shall have to eradicate you. Marley shall face complete destruction by the thundering steps of a million wall titans. The world shall quake and when people ask why as they cry out in despair, I shall point to you before they get *flattened*."

Willy would have shivered at how stone-cold Eren's response was, weren't it for the fact he was going to call Eren's bluff right here and now. "You won't activate The Rumbling, Eren Yeager. Your goal has always been to save all Eldians. You wouldn't want to kill all the Eldians in the internment zones scattered within Marley, right? Besides, destroying Marley with The Rumbling will turn the whole world against you. You'd be proving everyone right about the nature of Eldians and be walking a path of destruction and repeat all the atrocities our ancestors did in the past," he said calmly.

If Willy had expected Eren to back-off, he had assumed entirely wrong. Eren's retort was as cold as it was before. "The Eldians within the internment zones think we are all devils anyway. If I have to destroy the entire world to save the Eldians, then so be it. You have

yourself to thank for the fact of not surrendering peacefully. I suggest you prepare your sister Lara for the onslaught that's coming your way."

While this scared Willy a little bit, he was still sure that Eren was bluffing. Unless he wasn't, of course, because then he was in deep shit. A chuckle escaped his lips, one that didn't calm down his growing nerves. He wanted to reply, but before he could, Eren had already teleported him out of the Coordinate.

Eren sighed deeply as he was all alone again, the tree of Yggdrasil almost reacting to the visible stress that appeared on his face the moment he dropped his façade. While he knew that Willy had most likely already prepared for war against him with the surrounding nations as his allies, he hadn't been sitting by idly himself. Even though his body screamed at him to hurry, he didn't move yet. Time flowed completely different inside the Coordinate, so he gratefully took advantage of that.

"He didn't accept, did he?" the soft, feminine voice which could only belong to a young girl rang out through the silence of the Coordinate's endless void. Eren didn't bother turning around, because he knew she was standing right next to him. Her appearance was meek and timid, like that of a weak peasant. Her skin was covered in soot and dust, and she only wore a simple cotton dress that reached down to about her knees and was torn all over. Her once-golden locks of her hair-now almost grey-looking-partially covered her almost lifeless eyes. She was on her knees, building what looked like a castle made out of the sand that seemed to cover the Coordinate and feed the towering tree behind them.

While her appearance radiated that she'd completely given up on everything, her expression and her voice were still filled with a child-like hope as she addressed Eren. The original Founder, Ymir Fritz, had been nothing but a slave ever since she existed only within the Coordinate. Time was meaningless for her as she was forced to do the biddings of the current holder of the Founding Titan, serving to

fuel endless wars that eventually brought ruin and misery to the Eldians.

However, that changed completely when she met Eren Yeager, the man with a personality as determined as the Attack Titan itself. Always moving forward, battling for the freedom of his friends and his people, and ultimately, her freedom as well. It had taken Eren some attempts to convince her to work together with him, namely, one timeline where he'd activated The Rumbling and completely decimated all the other nations. It was since then as if a chain was lifted from Ymir's own Curse. Ever since then, every time Eren was sent back, Ymir managed to have Eren retain all of his memories, as well as the power of the titans. She had aided him all the way, and now, after countless attempts, they were at the final crossroad together.

"You know he wasn't going to accept, Ymir. He didn't accept the last ten times we tried, and he didn't accept now, and he won't accept even if we try another ten times, that is just who he is," Eren responded, suppressing the sigh that was building up. Over the course of the last years, he'd been in contact with Ymir daily. She had been restoring the memories he had lost every time he'd failed in the past and returned to Ymir, who would then send him back to the day Wall Maria was going to fall with the new information she'd gathered from him. Every time, she would be able to aide Eren a little better and move him one step closer to their ultimate goal of saving as many Eldian lives as possible and setting her free once and for all.

Right now, only the final hurdle remained. Eliminating the elusive War Hammer Titan and defeating Marley *without* the hatred of the world falling over them. They knew how to accomplish the latter part: getting rid of the Power of the Titans would appease the other nations enough for it not to be a problem anymore. However, they had yet to figure out how to defeat Marley and save the Eldians living inside the internment zones.

"That means we have to go to war again," Ymir concluded sadly, idly drawing some windows with one of her fingers in the castle she'd created. Eren knew how much she loathed war. It was one of the reasons he wanted to set her free. The history of Ymir being a devil and causing destruction everywhere with her newfound powers under the authority of the Eldian King was a blatant lie created by the surrounding nations, particularly Marley, who were terrified of her powers.

For thirteen years, Ymir only brought peace and prosperity to Eldia. This, in turn, *did* grow Eldia into a powerful nation, who began to oppress Marley and the surrounding nations. When Ymir took notice of this and showed signs of treason, the King of Eldia had her executed, and forced her three daughters-Maria, Rose, and Sheena-to eat her remains so the valuable Power of the Titans would not be lost.

Ever since then, Eldia used the Power of the Titans to wage war, something Ymir had never wished for. It is why she cursed everybody who would inherit her powers to only live for thirteen years, the exact amount of time she was alive when she inherited the powers herself. It did little to scare the new inheritors though; the world became so deadly afraid of the titan powers that everybody despised the Eldians. Few knew that Ymir was benevolent, even fewer wished to accept it. Yet, Eren had managed to convince surrounding nations in the past this was the real history of Eldia before. Ymir was certain he could do it again.

"It'll be the last war," Eren responded firmly and resolutely. "Willy and Lara Tybur will fall. Marley's bloodshed and oppression of all Eldians will end at last. And then, you shall be free forever." As always, Eren's confidence managed to spread a smile on Ymir's face. She'd long given up hope before, until Eren had come around and pulled her out of that bottomless pit she'd fallen into.

"I admire you, Eren Yeager," Ymir said genuinely, the sand castle she'd been making long forgotten. "Even after failing over and over again, you're not giving up. Why's that?"

"Because we were born into this world," Eren replied immediately. "We all deserve to be free. That is why, no matter what, I'll keep moving forward!"

Ymir nodded her head, a sudden gust of wind collapsing her castle of sand. "Very well, Eren. I shall give you my full support like I've been doing, as always. How are we going to defeat Marley and free the Eldians living inside the internment zones?" It was a genuine question, as they've tried this countless of times before. This time, however, Eren was certain his plan was going to work.

Eren looked at her crumbled sand castle and smiled. "Let's build a few more castles."

The internment zone of Liberio was one of the biggest in all of Marley. As such, a large population of Eldians called it their home. While life was incredibly tough, many believed that if the Devils from Paradis were eradicated, they could show the world they were different and, in turn, atone for their ancestors' sins. However, ever since a month ago, their point of view had changed a bit. Many still clung to their old beliefs, but they were now filled with uncertainty and doubt.

Eren Yeager, current holder of the Founding Titan, had made them all a promise: he was going to liberate all of them and atone for the sins of their ancestors. Over the course of a month, he had spoken with all of them inside the Coordinate. Many of them were outraged the first time around. However, the fact Eren had gotten the former Warriors of Marley on his side and backing him up started to convince more and more people over time.

It also didn't help that Marley had started to guard the internment zones intensely, like Eren predicted would happen. It was as if with the outbreak of a war, all of the Eldians were going to be used as hostages or were going to be straight up executed. Eren, however, kept on insisting they had nothing to worry about. All they needed to do was stay clear from the borders of Liberio today. Not that it was

very difficult. Anybody who came close without a valid reason was immediately shot by the Marleyan guards.

This-in Willy's mind-ensured he had an ace up his sleeve if things happened to go south. His sister, Lara Tybur, was incredibly strong. Combined with the help of neighboring countries, he was sure he could stop everything except a total Rumbling from Eren, but even if that happened, he hoped he could threaten Eren with holding all these Eldian lives hostage. He was sure Eren would not want their blood on his conscience.

However, the moment he had been teleported inside his mansion again after speaking to Eren, he couldn't help but feel extremely nervous. *"Is he really going to go through with it and activate The Rumbling?"* Willy thought, his heartbeat rising. He wanted to calm himself down, but before he could, the porcelain in his study began to shake ever so slightly. *"An earthquake? No... It couldn't be!"* He ran to his window, which gave him view over a big and lush forest stretching far into the distance. However, what he saw, he didn't like one bit.

Birds of every species imaginable were flying away from where the tremors were coming from in a complete frenzy. Willy's eyes turned into complete pinpricks, he tried to stumble out of his study to warn his sister, but before he could reach her, a voice he knew all too well spoke up in his mind.

"To all Eldians. My name is Eren Yeager. I have started The Rumbling. All of Marley shall be flattened and everybody within that nation shall perish. Anybody who tries to oppose me shall be flattened too. Heed my warning; none shall stop me until I have liberated my kin. To the current holder of the War Hammer Titan, Lara Tybur: resistance is futile. You too shall be flattened alongside everybody you bring along with you to stop me."

Willy hissed in complete panic, close to hyperventilating as Lara met him halfway. She was a lot calmer than he was, as she gave him the support he sought. "He really did it," Willy whispered in shock. "I've

doomed us all. I really thought he'd be bluffing, but he's going to go ahead and destroy everything to save the Eldians."

"Then it is time to meet Eren Yeager head-on, brother," Lara replied in a soft and collected voice. "We'll set up the defense we've been preparing along the coast of Marley to slow him down as much as possible. In the meantime, we have to bargain with him about all the Eldian lives he's going to throw away in the Internment zones, should he not stop his foolish actions." She paused and looked at him with a determined gaze. "Have faith in the power of the War Hammer. We have not lost quite yet."

Willy knew Lara was right. He balled his fists and gritted his teeth. *"Activating The Rumbling immediately after our talk, too."* He ran down the stairs of his mansion, completely ignoring the tremors as his only goal was to inform Commander Magath and all the other high-ranking officials as quickly as possible. Though, he didn't have to go far. The moment he opened the beautiful oaken double-doors of his quaint abode, the man he was looking for was already approaching him.

"Commander Magath!" Willy yelled, "it has begun, prepare the defense line along the coastline that we've been talking about. The War Hammer titan shall accompany you."

If Magath's eyes could've grown any bigger, they would have rolled out of his skull. He gritted his teeth and snarled before nodding his head. "So, Eren Yeager has decided to go all out? Then, so will we."

Theo Magath ran back the way he came from and began barking orders to his men. They had to set up the defense quickly so they could go ahead and evacuate as many people from within Marley immediately. The news of a potential rumbling spread quickly and all around the coastline, as troops of Marley began to prepare for the inevitable war that was approaching.

Alongside them was Lara Tybur-not yet transformed-but still waiting for the inevitable. Oddly enough, the tremors had completely

stopped some time ago. *"The titans have probably reached the ocean by now and are making their way through it,"* Lara reasoned, a single droplet of sweat rolling from her brow as she gazed out. Any moment now, she was sure, the ghastly plumes of scorching steam emanating from the bodies of hundreds of colossal titans would be seen over the horizon.

It was so eerily quiet you could cut the air with a knife. However, the longer Lara waited, the more her suspicions began to rise. Something was off about all of this. She had clearly heard Eren's voice in her head like Willy had and felt the tremors. So why were her instincts screaming to her that something was terribly wrong?

Another thirty minutes passed with practically nothing happening. The palpable tension that hung in the air was met with almost visual anxiety. However, it was at this moment that Lara was sure something was completely off. *"What is Eren Yeager doing?"* she thought with growing uncertainty and annoyance. It was then that a messenger came stumbling up to Theo Magath.

"Commander Magath, sir! The capital of Marley has taken heavy damage from the Eldians!" he stated in complete panic, sweat pouring from his brows. "They came from the south via blimps and they have a multitude of titan shifters wreaking havoc. We need to mobilize the troops immediately and give the army their support!"

"What!?" Theo Magath hissed like a snake, his entire expression turning dark and menacing.

However, Lara Tybur didn't react whatsoever. Somehow, she knew this was going to happen, but in the end, she was tricked nonetheless. *"Eren Yeager didn't activate The Rumbling after all,"* she thought sourly, her expression remaining eerily stoic. *"But then... what were those tremors ? Something had to cause them. Something big."*

"Inform the officials at Liberio!" Magath said urgently, stretching one of his arms to emphasize its importance. "We need to start rounding

up the Eldians so we have something to threaten Eren Yeager with."

"Sir, we can't. The Liberio Internment Zone has been completely blocked off, as well as the other internment zones," the messenger replied, his panic not dissipating at all.

Magath froze for a moment, as if he was struggling to process what he had just been told. Even Lara Tybur stopped and gazed at them incredulously. "What!? How!?" Theo Magath roared loudly, his anger getting the best of him. It was like Eren Yeager was always a step ahead of them.

"Well..."

"Man, patrol duty is so boring," one of the Marleyan soldiers complained, walking alongside his comrade around the border of Liberio's Internment Zone. Its fortified walls were surrounded with watchtowers, searchlights, and fences lined up with barbed wire on top, making sure nobody could escape. Not that anything had happened in the month he got stationed here. Most Eldians didn't even come close to the walls. "Why are we here again?"

"Orders from higher up," his comrade replied, shrugging his shoulders. "Maybe they're afraid these Devils might try to escape or something?"

He snorted, a chuckle escaping his mouth. "Like that would ever happen. Nobody has escaped from here before. Besides, most Eldians are content living in this shithole like the pigs they are. I don't understand why we're patrolling a wall with heavy artillery and enough men to take down the armored titan."

Again, his comrade shrugged his shoulders. "Me neither. But I, for one, am not complaining. It beats being on the frontlines, living in dirty trenches and under intense heat, while fighting against the surrounding nations."

The Marleyan soldier sighed and kicked a pebble away with his boot. "Maybe you're right. Still, I wouldn't mind if something interesting would happen, though. We've still got over nine hours left on the shift and I'm bored as hell."

At that moment, it seemed as if time stood still for a moment. The air became heavy and chilly, and a brief tremor began to spread across the land. A deafening chorus of shrill screeches pierced through the internment zone as everything turned a horrible yellow hue from hundreds of violent lightning bolts that struck the ground all around the border of Liberio's internment zone in unison. A single potent tremor rippled through the city as a multitude of explosions were heard all around, blasting concrete in every direction. Every Marleyan soldier stationed at the perimeter walls simply ceased to exist as hundreds of colossal titans began to form out of thin air. Tons upon tons of steaming flesh rained down as their newfound thundering footfalls crushed the entire border fence along with all of the Marleyan equipment and men stationed there.

Standing at over sixty meters tall, the newly created colossal titans stood proudly and obediently as ordered by their Founder. Tons upon tons of titan hardening began to expand from the ground up, coating the titans in a thick layer of hardening that formed itself into a wall, much like the colossal titans did on Paradis a century ago under orders of King Fritz. Now there was no way any Eldian could get out, but not a single Marleyan could get in either.

Lara had heard enough. Eren had simultaneously tricked most of the army of Marley to be stationed at the east where Paradis was located and had ensured all Eldians within the internment zones were completely safe via the spontaneous formation of walls. Only if she went there personally, she could break those titan walls, but that was something Eren had taken into account as well. The capital of Marley was all the way at the south. They were attacking it with blimps, which meant Paradis had allied up with a foreign country,

which in turn meant Lara had no choice but to go there if Marley was to have any hope of defending itself.

" *Eren Yeager*," Lara thought, calmly walking away from the rest of the soldiers who were scrambling to get aboard trains headed to the capital as quickly as possible, " *you might have the winning hand right now, but you're forgetting one thing.*" She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and reached up to remove a single hairpin from her neatly-bound hair. With a determined expression, she cut her hand with her hairpin, triggering her shift.

A powerful lightning bolt emerged from the sky, tainting it with a deep yellow hue as it rained down with a deafening thunderclap that cracked the earth upon impact. Tons of titan flesh began to materialize as the War Hammer Titan rose from the ground up. As the bones and flesh formed and lurched skyward, a thick and resilient layer of elegant silver-colored armor began to coalesce around the titan. Like a knight whose armor gleamed defiantly under the sunlight, Lara Tybur's almighty War Hammer Titan stood proud and tall at its towering height of fifteen meters. "*I still have the War Hammer and its special ability. Something you have just foolishly challenged .*"

The capital of Marley was a blooming city full of life. Located deep in the south, it had access to a large river flowing all the way through the country from up north, which connected to a port further up west. The mountainous ranges provided excellent defense against any enemies coming from the north, as well as rich soils from the river's basin which a lot of farmers gratefully took advantage of.

That's why when industrialization began, the capital of Marley benefitted the most. While the city itself was rich and prospering, its defenses beyond its northern ranges lacked severely. The only way the city could be attacked effectively was from the south, which was covered by a large river and a sprawling swath of dry lands which stretched on for kilometers on end. Even if an army with the newest technology marched through it, they would've been spotted from

kilometers out, however, Marley would have little means of stopping it unless with its own army.

It's why Marley didn't bother protecting it as much as their borders. If nothing got past the border, in theory, the capital would be safe. Especially now with the looming threat of Paradis and The Rumbling, they had situated the largest part of their forces alongside the east coast while their powerful fleet patrolled the waters to the east and south.

So, when on a cloudy afternoon a multitude of unidentified blimps suddenly descended from the sky and came into view above the city, all hell broke loose. The few hundred soldiers situated in the city stood little to no chance against their adversaries, which was soon revealed to be none other than Eren Yeager himself. Alongside him were a multitude of other titan shifters and around one thousand of the most well-trained men in usage of vertical maneuvering equipment. Needless to say, Eren had taken over the city in just a few hours with little to no resistance.

" It seems that our ploy has worked," Eren thought, satisfied with the results so far. Next to him stood his stepmother Dina, as well as Connie, in their titan forms. *"It's now a matter of the forces of the Azumabito to secure more strongholds further inside Marley while we wait for Lara to arrive."* Eren knew it was inevitable that she'd come around and combat him. He knew from past experiences that she was very powerful, and he knew this incarnation would be no different. But, for some reason, it always felt like she held back and didn't use the full power of the War Hammer Titan. This time around, Eren had a feeling that was going to be different. This was, after all, the last war.

" Still, we should definitely be in the advantage," Eren reasoned with himself, his nervousness steadily growing. *' Lara is the last obstacle before our goal is fulfilled. Once she is beaten, Eldians across the world will be free . It's only one titan shifter against the rest. It's true that I can't really use the Founder here, but with our overwhelming numbers, we should have no trouble taking her down!"* Even though

he tried to reassure himself, for some reason, he couldn't keep the nervousness out of his body.

He gave a sideways glance at the rest of his team, namely Ymir who was scouting the buildings alongside the Survey Corps in her Jaw Titan form. Jean, who had not yet transformed-as it would render his titan completely useless before Lara would even have arrived-and the newly acquired Beast and Cart titans he'd gotten from Zeke and Pieck respectively. To say they were terrifying was an understatement.

Everyone in the military had agreed that the Cart's titan powers should go to none other than Hange Zoë. She was so ecstatic about her selection to become a titan shifter that her squeal of eagerness had threatened to break the windows of the conference hall they were in when the decision was formally announced.

Eren had to suppress a chuckle as he looked at her titan. Instead of a four-meter class, she was actually six meters tall. Quadrupedal like all her predecessors, Hange's Cart titan resembled a big beetle, with her outside flesh being protected in a hard carapace of titan hardening. A forked horn with two deadly spear tips protruded from her face upwards, and her membranous bug-like wings were neatly tucked under a split shell of hardened exoskeleton, which granted her the ability to fly for short distances. Unlike Pieck's weaker Cart, Hange's Cart titan was very durable and could hold itself in combat without the need of addons or support. However, that came at the drawback of not possessing Pieck's nigh-infinite endurance nor the ability to infinitely activate her titan over and over again. Instead, she had a couple of very strong serrated mandibles that produced high amounts of potent electricity.

This gave her a huge edge over other titan shifters. Even if she wasn't able to break through titan-hardening or Connie's armor, that didn't stop her electricity from being conducted all throughout the titan's flesh, which meant she could attack the user directly and take them out without needing to defeat the titan in question.

Then, there was the debate who should get the terrifying powers of the Beast Titan. There were a few candidates in question, but ultimately, everybody agreed that Erwin Smith should be the one to be granted the powers of the Beast Titan. If everyone thought that Jean's ice giant was scary, they had a whole other thing coming when Erwin shifted for the first time and revealed his titan for everyone to see. His appearance was that of a bipedal dragon without wings. He had a thick tail to support himself, and stood proudly at seventeen meters like Zeke had done. His entire skin was melted into leathery green-colored scales, with two horns protruding out of his head facing backward. His hands and feet possessed abnormally long claws that were immensely sharp, while his mouth was full of long serrated teeth. The most terrifying thing was his thundering roar that could paralyze even the most hardened soldiers, and the fact he could breathe fire so hot that the flames were blue.

" It's amusing. Just like Zeke and Pieck, the Beast and Cart work together as leader and support in the form of Erwin and Hange . It's also like Ymir gave all of my friends the best possible titans and powers she could offer them," Eren thought, extremely impressed with the amount of power he had on his side and extremely grateful to Ymir the Founder in general. Never mind the fact he had two extremely skilled Ackerman and around one-thousand of the finest soldiers the Survey Corps could offer on his side, as well as the forces and technology of the Azumabito and the distant nation of Hizuru. With confidence at an all-time high, he was sure his side could not lose this war.

" All we have to do now is take down Lara Tybur and her War Hammer Titan to end this endless cycle of hatred, once and for all."

There we have it, people! Did you like it, love it, hate it? Please review! I love to read each and every one of them! :3 Next chapter the start of the final battle! Until then! ^^

PS: While this final battle might look like it's going to be one-sided right now, it really isn't going to be. The War Hammer titan

is my favourite titan and I want to do it justice. You'll see next chapter. ;3

~Syrup

Warhammer Whammy

Hey guys, I'm back with the new chapter! Sorry for the delay, but writers block and IRL kept me busy. Now though, I plan to finish this story once and for all! Huge shout-out to my very good friend ArcyAnderson for beta-reading this chapter!

Enjoy! :)

Having the element of surprise meant that Eren could prepare for Lara Tybur far in advance.

Even though he was holding the capital of Marley under his control, it wouldn't be for at least another few hours before the opposing main forces arrived. It gave him plenty of time to scout ahead and set up his line of defense. After all, Eren knew Lara had to meet him head-on. She did so in the past and she would be doing it again. *"The difference this time is that for once, I have the advantage,"* Eren thought as he peered over the many fancy buildings that made up the metropolitan area of Marley's capital.

It was a stark difference from the poor appearance of Shiganshina and the rest of Wall Maria's districts, with its beautiful homes and shops lining the gorgeous white pavements. The expensive brick that made up the foundations and red-tiled rooftops almost seemed to shine brilliantly under the bright sunrays. In between the buildings, small and picturesque canals with crystal-clear waters ran throughout the city. All of it gave off the vibe of a small and peaceful paradise, weren't it for the destruction Eren had caused alongside the other titan shifters already. An inevitable byproduct of a battle.

Eren situated all his companions around vantage points across the city, with only his stepmother Dina remaining at his side for now. They stood defiantly in the middle of the city as if to give off the message that they owned the place. The mountain range-which was

a natural defense overlooking the city-was big and imposing, but Eren was sure Lara would have no trouble getting over it. As Eren waited anxiously, the wind blew eerily around them.

" If we stick to our plan, we should take Lara off - guard entirely and finish her off without too much trouble," Eren reasoned to himself even though his nerves refused to go down. He clenched his fists and squinted his eyes to see if he could spot any sight of the imposing War Hammer Titan already, without much success. *" She's the last hurdle . And if the plan might fail, we have back-up after back-up,"* he continued to reason. There was just no way Lara should stand a chance. So, Eren didn't quite understand why his nerves got the better of him.

Next to him, Dina appeared to sense her stepson's growing discomfort and reassured him by gently placing a hand on his shoulder. *"I fully understand how you feel, Eren , "* she thought lovingly. *"When I was in that coma back at the battle on the Reiss' farm, I saw what you experienced inside the paths."* Her eyes softened with kindness as she nodded her head. *"You never gave up. Even after failing hundreds of times. Your resilience and willpower are what gave the founder Ymir the strength to keep on trying as well."* Dina turned her attention back to the mountain sides. *"If there's anyone in the world who can stop the hatred of the world against Eldians, it's you, Eren."*

This evident boost in confidence was just what Eren needed. He relaxed his tensed muscles somewhat and gave a slight nod to his stepmother in return. He was more than ready to face whatever Lara could throw at him and this time, he'd succeed. His large titan body got into a battle-ready stance when he squinted his eyes and saw something appear on the summit of one of the distant mountains. Two giant metallic-like hands that shone under the sunrays and whose grip cracked the rocks under them became visible, followed soon by the ominous head of the War Hammer Titan itself.

Eren froze for a moment. *"Much how like Bertolt appeared all that time ago ... "* Eren thought with a grimace as pictures of

Shiganshina's destruction and swarming by titans flooded his mind. The War Hammer Titan wasn't nearly as imposing as the Colossal Titan, but Lara was an experienced titan-shifter, and that made up for it plentifully. The way she stood at the peak of the mountain proudly, quite literally looking down on them made Eren grit his teeth. *"She's not carrying her weapon of choice,"* Eren noticed sharply with narrowed eyes. Instead, she made what looked like a round and metallic snowboard for herself. With all the experience in the world, she jumped from the peak and threw her make-shift snowboard downward so she landed on it and skated down the snowy mountaintop without much effort.

Lara's movements were almost regal and relaxed as she made her descent, pushing away large swaths of snow from her path relentlessly. Even when the snow melted away and made way for sharp pebbles and jagged rocks, Lara didn't slow down whatsoever. Within just a few instants, she reached the foot of the mountain. The only thing that remained in her path was the small valley and the farmland between the city and the mountains. The War Hammer Titan kept going unabated and completely ignored the trees and farmhouses in her path, ripping through them like they were rotten bushes and measly obstacles as she rode through them. In a matter of seconds, she reached the walls of the city and gracefully jumped over them. While in the air, she took her make-shift board in one of her hands and landed on her feet with a loud thud, which rattled most of the city and shattered nearby windows of houses and buildings into a million pieces.

Lara stood at her full height and observed her surroundings as the dust and debris from her impact settled. She noticed the multiple titan-shifters situated all around the city and appeared relatively unimpressed. Her azure eyes darted from side to side as she made a quick count and confirmed all of their titan shifters were present at the city except the Colossal Titan. She gave a slight and courteous bow to Eren, who was standing a few hundred meters away from her.

"Eren Yeager," Lara acknowledged with a booming and feminine voice. "You have caused Marley a lot of trouble." The round construct under her arm burst into an azure shroud of light rippling with yellow lightning as it broadened and thickened into a hardened shield, which fastened tightly to her arm. She paused and raised her shield high into the air as another blast of azure energy burst on her other arm, which swiftly coalesced into a fitting blade of hardened titan flesh to go along with it. She gripped its handle backward while bending her knees slightly in an aggressive stance. "However, this is as far as you'll get. The time for talking is over. Now, come at me with all you've got!" she roared challengingly.

" Yes, *I will,* " Eren thought defiantly as his face turned into a dark scowl, *"the time for talking is over. We will settle this, right here, right now!"* Eren gave a titanic roar as he charged at Lara with all the intent of killing her on the spot, causing the ground to quake and the buildings around him to rattle. His fists glowed as he hardened them with a crystal-like layer in anticipation while the War Hammer Titan patiently waited for his attack. The overconfidence in Lara's stance was almost mocking. She appeared calm with her makeshift shield raised and her blade drawn behind her back to slash at Eren at a moment's notice. *"This is very strange, however,"* Eren noted. *"She came all this way alone and intends to fight with just a sword and shield? There's got to be more to this, I better be careful."*

Eren growled and focused completely on his opponent. *"Lucky for me, I know that you're not hiding in your nape ,"* he thought as his thunderous steps rattled the roof tiles and rippled the water in the picturesque canals. *"So, all I must do is..."* Eren's swift punch reared up with all the force he had accumulated in his monstrous charge. The moment he swung his hardened fist forward, it released a thunderous boom that shattered every window in the city as he broke through the sound barrier. Lara had just enough time to adjust her shield and posture to block the incoming attack, only to fall completely for Eren's feint. *"... This!"* he finished, shifting his weight accordingly by ducking and spinning low to the ground in a sweeping

kick with his leg. He knew she wouldn't watch him harden his feet and it worked out splendidly.

Lara was completely taken off-guard, as her legs were left wide open in her defensive stance. Eren's foot connected with her shin, smashing through it with a sickening crack and bending it in a way it wasn't supposed to. The remaining force of the kick swept Lara off her feet and sent her crashing into the nearby houses, which shattered into a plume of dust and debris upon impact, and caused her to drop her choice of weapons in the process.

Eren quickly picked up the sharp blade with a loud roar. He grabbed the War Hammer Titan by the ankle and paused for a moment. There was supposed to be a life-cord which connected her main body to her titan so he could cut it. Yet, there was none in either foot. "*Where is it?*" Eren hissed to himself as he scanned her body in frustration, only to hear a slight chuckle coming from her.

"Eren Yeager, that was a formidable opening move," Lara praised curtly as she stood to a crouch and turned her upper body around, not at all rattled by what happened. "However, if you think I left myself vulnerable, then you have learned nothing!" Her words resounded imposingly throughout the city as a bolt of lightning vibrantly formed a large protrusion of a thick three-pointed spear in her arms, aimed straight at Eren's chest.

"What... !?" Eren questioned in disbelief as Lara thrust the spear forward and stabbed cleanly through his exposed torso until it came out of the other side. A confident smirk edged on Lara's grilled mouth while Eren cursed himself under his breath. "*She did hide herself in the nape after all !*" he growled as his expression turned into a murderous snarl. He instinctively grabbed the pole of the spear with his hand while tightening the grip on the dagger with his other hand. Steaming-hot blood dripped from Lara's spear as Eren tensed and tried to find his footing again.

Luckily, Eren didn't have to face the mighty Lara Tybur all by himself. The thundering quakes of quickly-approaching footsteps told him

enough. He only had just enough time to look to his left and see Dina coming to his aide at full speed.

" I promised you would never be alone again." Dina's claws elongated with a shrill screech and sharpened as she jumped high into the sky and raised both of her arms above her head. She let out a deafening war cry and pounced on the War Hammer Titan like an angry lioness. Her claws slashed downward and hit both Lara's face and her arms as she landed on top of her in a booming collision that threw up billowing plumes of smoke all over again and cratered the pavement below them with a small quake that reverberated through the area.

Dina's claws were almost as sharp and hard as those of the Jaw Titan. As such, Lara's arms and face suffered long gashes all over them while the pole of her spear broke in multiple pieces, freeing Eren from her grip. *"Be as mighty as it's claimed that you are ,"* Dina thought, roaring in an intimidating matter as she brought her claws down on Lara's face again, slicing through her plated armor as if it were wet paper, *"We still outnumber you eight to one!"* she finished her thought with a final uppercutting slash, ripping through the flesh of Lara's neck all the way to her face with so much force that she beheaded the War Hammer Titan in the process. A violent gush of steaming blood and the harrowing sounds of ripping flesh echoed throughout as Lara's large head flew away from her torso like a bowling ball and smashing through multiple damaged houses, leaving a line of devastation in its wake.

Lara's titan seized to move and slouched underneath Dina, who was panting and only now realizing what she had done. *"I... I decapitated her,"* she thought incredulously to herself. *"If she was in the nape, did I just rip her to shreds?"* She blinked and gave Eren a look of disbelief, who was equally as shocked. *"Wasn't Lara very powerful? How come we defeated her so easily then?"* Dina didn't understand, and from the looks of it, Eren didn't either.

" Something isn't right. Lara's always been a nuisance, and now she goes down this quickly. If this really was all it took to kill her, why

haven't I been able to succeed before?" Eren grumbled to himself as he removed the spear from his torso. Potent jets of steam emerged from his gaping wounds due to his titan working hard to heal the extensive damage in his chest. He slowly got up as his eyes scanned the area yet again for anything suspicious. No sign of Marley's army yet and, with the speed they were travelling, he knew it was still going to take hours before they arrived. The rest of his companions had watched the battle from afar, not abandoning their posts until Eren said so. It seemed they were equally as unconvinced that the War Hammer Titan had gone down already.

"We'll worry about that later. Right now, we need to secure Lara and make sure she won't transform again," Eren reasoned with himself, slowly making his way through the wreckage to where the War Hammer Titan's head rested. He reached down and roughly picked it up, only to hiss and recoil at the creepy grin on Lara's slashed face. *"Something is horribly wrong. Lara's body isn't here, and there was no life-cord. How... was this titan moving?"*

"Eren Yeager," Lara's severed head spoke as if she was still completely conscious, causing Eren to jump in surprise and drop it onto the ground from the startle. The head rolled unceremoniously for a bit until it stopped and looked eerily at him and Dina, "you're not the only one with tricks up their sleeve."

Immediately, the entire ground started to shake ominously, as if something massive was approaching. Eren growled as he slammed his foot onto Lara's decapitated head for good measure, crushing it with a gush of steaming blood. He returned his attention back on the mountainous side that Lara had approached from previously.

"There's no way that..." Eren hissed, only for him to widen his eyes like saucers when two metallic hands appeared over the summit and *another* War Hammer Titan's head rose to peer straight at him. *"What the..."*

He looked back at Dina and she confirmed his suspicion; Lara's body was nowhere inside the Titan they had just taken down. *"You don't mean..."* as Eren eyed the mountains again, he had to do a

double take and guffawed in complete surprise. Now there was not one, but two extra War Hammer Titans looking down on him!

The mountains rumbled and massive rock slides and avalanches crashed down from the towering summits as more pairs of hands joined them. That amount grew to three... five... ten... twenty...

Eren's heart beat rapidly in his chest, the nervousness he had been fighting back returning tenfold as he looked at his opponents staring back at him creepily. *"She can multiply herself!? How is she even controlling them!? Where is Lara herself!?"* Eren thought with growing dread, taking a few steps back while still holding Lara's dagger from before. Eren raised his fist in the air, the signal for everybody to get ready for the massive battle which was about to unfold.

"It seems our opponent has a few tricks up her sleeve as well," Erwin noted while calculating the odds of their survival. The ground was shaking powerfully as twenty War Hammer Titan's rushed down the mountain, imitating a mini-rumbling that even had Eren intimidated for a few seconds. Erwin squinted his eyes and looked at his surrounding companions. *"Lara has fully committed to sacrificing the capital to defeat us. There's no way she's contemplating casualties if she's unleashing this upon us. If we want to win, we need to be strategic and stay in groups or we'll die one by one."*

Nodding to Hange, she climbed on top of his back to peer at the pure destructive army approaching them like an apocalypse. "This isn't going as Eren has planned," she spoke gruffly within her titan. "Lara possesses abilities he wasn't aware of." She stayed silent for a few second as the War Hammer Titans equally split off in groups of four. Connie and Sasha protectively stood in front of Ymir's more vulnerable titan while Eren and Dina took the front and braced themselves for impact. "They're going to overrun the city and try to defeat us with raw power. We can assume they will have flawless team work as they're controlled by the same entity. We'll have to play off our strengths if we want to beat them."

Erwin's monstrous titan stepped forward with tremendous force, his scales rattling the pavement beneath while he growled so deeply that it resonated throughout the entire city. Two groups of four War Hammer Titans approached them, each of them wielding different weapons, from whips to hammers, to swords and maces, and even to crossbows. *"Eight against two. They can easily overwhelm us if we're not being careful. However, Lara has never seen us before. She doesn't know our powers, but we do know what she can do,"* Erwin noted sharply. Finally, he let out a deafening roar worthy of a monster of his size.

It didn't seem to intimidate the War Hammer Titans in the slightest. Like an oiled machine, four of them started to flank Erwin and Hange in a swift movement. Two took a more frontal approach while leaving open the center for the final two who used ranged weapons. Raising their armored crossbows, they pointed them forward and shot thick arrows the size of pillars aimed straight at Erwin's face. The two arrows whizzed in the air with such velocity they made a noise akin of a whirling missile.

Hange was quick to react. Unfolding her wings within her hardened carapace, she jumped off Erwin's back, with the extra velocity making her go high in the sky. She lowered her massive horn and faced the two incoming arrows head on with practiced precision and, with a little bit of instinct inherited from her titan, threw her head up sharply. The resulting movement made the two arrows collide with her horn and shatter them to dust. "Amazing!" Hange squealed like a little girl out of pure excitement. "Erwin! Did you see tha-Ack!"

Her sentence abruptly died down when the spiky end of a War Hammer Titan's war hammer smashed into her body gruesomely, its impact so severe it created a small shockwave all around it before Hange flew through the air like a shattered ragdoll, smashing through buildings, and leaving total carnage behind.

" *Hange!*" Erwin shouted through gritted teeth while facing the War Hammer who had just utterly swatted Hange's titan away like it was an annoying fly. Breathing in thickly, Erwin unleashed a potent

flamethrower from his opened maw which made the sky turn bright blue from the heat it radiated. The blue flames roared through the air, melting off the pavement and surrounding buildings as they enveloped the War Hammer Titan completely, its strength so encompassing that it incinerated all the houses behind the War Hammer into ashes and started a big and potent fire that spread for many city blocks. Not much of the War Hammer remained as the flames crackled at the hardening and melted it along with the titan's flesh into a big pile of goop and lava.

Erwin didn't keep up his attack for long, electing to save precious energy. Seeing that he had defeated one of them, he tried to turn his attention to the four flanking him and the one at the front. Two of them had spears who were about to impale him like he was a fish. *"I need to prioritize them considering that if they hit me in my neck, I'm done for."* He knew doing this would leave him completely open and vulnerable for the other three. Never mind the two in the back which had reloaded their crossbows. *"With Hange down, it's one versus seven momentarily."*

Shaking his head mentally, Erwin shifted his weight using his tail and whipped it at the incoming War Hammer Titans and the spears they carried. Their forward thrusts meant as soon as his large tail made contact, it was pierced through at multiple spots. His scales did little to stop them, allowing Erwin to note Lara's titan hardening was superior to his armored scales. Yet Erwin did not let this deter him as he managed to smack both Titans with his tail and blast them away like a couple of hockey pucks. He grimaced as he bled profusely, not having time to dodge the other attacks coming his way.

A roar escaped his maw as a whip with multiple blades raked across his torso, ripping large pieces of flesh out of his body in a steaming bloodbath. Another War Hammer Titan stabbed him right in his side, with her forward momentum making him lose balance as he threatened to fall over a crumbling building. He hissed as he eyed the final advancing titan rear back her immense war hammer, intending to blow his head cleanly off his torso.

Sasha knew that within the next few minutes, chaos would inevitably erupt all around them. Four of the War Hammer Titans had split off from the main force and approached them in rapid succession. *"It's do or die now,"* she thought, gritting her teeth and readying her Attack Titan. Possessing it meant she had a very special connection with Eren. She knew it was because of her strong mental willpower and resolve as a hunter that he'd chosen her to wield it; seeing all of Eren's past attempts to resolve the endless conflict put a strain on her not everybody would be able to handle. Still, it made her more determined to succeed. *"This time, Eren, we will not fail!"*

Sasha eyed her partner, Connie, and saw how he was protectively standing in front of Ymir to shield her. Lara chose for long ranged piercing weapons to engage them. All four of the incoming War Hammer Titans were carrying spears with multiple sharp tips. It was clear she wanted to target Connie's incredible hardened armored titan since he couldn't move much and deal an accurate blow by going straight for his neck from afar. *"She thinks Ymir and I won't pose much of a threat, but,"* Sasha thought while materializing her crossbow with a dazzling flash of yellow lightning, *"she underestimates how strong I am!"*

With deadly accuracy, Sasha aimed and fired a single bolt towards the incoming War Hammer Titans. Lara didn't even bother to dodge; she was fully confident she could take the attack, only to be surprised when the bolt had such raw force when it hit one of her titan's necks that it lobbed her head right off her torso with a gushing spray of heated blood. The defeated War Hammer Titan crashed haphazardly to the ground, creating smoke and dust while the other three advanced on without care.

"Great job, Sasha ! " Connie thought appreciatively, *"now I can just..."* His sentence died in his mind while his eyes widened like saucers. He hissed in pure surprise as the fallen War Hammer Titan threw her spear through her smoke cover with such velocity that Connie could only look and watch as it soared through the air and impaled Sasha cleanly through her chest. She stumbled back

several thundering steps, clearly just as surprised as Connie was while Lara gave them no time to recover whatsoever and pressed on her attack. *"The audacity of this bitch!"*

Connie roared and crouched low to the ground with his shoulder pressed forward, ready to bash the remaining three War Hammer Titans into oblivion. *"You're going to pay for that!"* he thought angrily as he dashed forward. His massive footsteps rumbled the ground with such force it felt like he was causing an earthquake as strong as Lara's twenty titans did put together. He was confident his armor would protect him from any strike, so when one War Hammer Titan deftly evaded him, he instead kept going and focused on the other two and rammed into them with his full force and weight.

Endless cracks formed on their armored bodies as the silver hardening trademark of the War Hammer Titan shattered upon impact and forcefully blasted away like they were made out of paper, with both of their bodies tumbling helplessly through the air like ragdolls and destroying multiple blocks of houses and canals until they came to a skidding halt under nothing but debris and severed limbs. It created so much ruckus that it felt like a bomb had gone off in the middle of the city. Connie smirked, admitting he'd be surprised if they were able to get up after that. *"That should teach them to-agh!"*

Connie froze as an immense sharp pain suddenly flared all through his torso, making him lose the feelings in his legs completely. *"What is-"* he thought before he spewed out blood, his eyes slowly turning to the right before he spotted the single War Hammer Titan he had previously evaded.

She was holding the spear with a cutting smirk on her face; she'd thrust the weapon exactly between the joint lines of the armor on his neck and managed to cleave his lower body completely off his torso. *"I can't... hold on..."* Rapidly, everything started to turn black for Connie, his consciousness giving in to sweet sleep while his massive legs gave out to him.

Lara simply withdrew her spear with a gush of heated blood and saw Connie go down abruptly, his body creating a rumble that almost shook Ymir off balance and left a deep indentation on the ground. She gasped as she saw both Sasha and Connie gravely injured. It would only be a matter of minutes before the remaining War Hammer Titan finished both off.

" I can't let that happen ! " Ymir thought while eying Lara with pure rage in her eyes. "After all that we went through, I won't end it like this!" While she was significantly smaller and weaker than the War Hammer Titan still standing strong before her, she wasn't about to back down. "Eren has taught me well! I can take on one of them on and save my friends!"

Powering herself up mentally, Ymir swiftly dashed toward the War Hammer Titan who was thrusting her spear back to cleave Connie like a cheap piece of meat and rammed into her side. The sudden impact threw Lara off, making her spear impact Connie's thick armor instead where it crumbled to nothing but scrap. Knowing that she had her speed and smaller size to her advantage over the lumbering and slower War Hammer Titan, Ymir climbed on top of Lara and tried to slash at her neck, only doing minimal damage to her as she did so. *" This armor is tougher than I thought. That's right, I don't need to defeat her. Sasha and Connie already managed to take care of three. If I stall long enough, they'll heal so they can finish the job and then potentially help our other allies!"* Ymir thought smartly.

However, during her thoughts, she hadn't expected for Lara to react so quickly. The War Hammer Titan reached out to her, grabbed her by the neck and the torso, and threw her to the ground violently. The resulting impact left dust flying everywhere and left a sizeable crater while Ymir gasped in her titan, lying there battered and broken. *"How!?"*

Ymir could only look at her adversary with widened eyes as she formed another spear into existence with a dazzling flash of azure and yellow lighting to finish her off for good...

Imma try my best to update this story once a month until it is completed! Please leave a review if you enjoyed it or if you have any constructive criticism for me! See y'all next time!

~Syrup

If I lose it all, slip and fall

Here to deliver my annual chapter! Enjoy, see y'all in 2024 again! :P

Eren noticed sharply that Lara had full control over every War Hammer Titan currently approaching the city walls of Marley's capital. *"The way how she effortlessly splits them all off into groups of four makes it seem like she's an oiled machine,"* he thought while bracing himself for impact. Two groups of four approached his location with different kinds of weaponry. Two carried long broadswords, which they rested on their shoulders. *"Heavy infantry. They should be slow but a blow might be enough to go through our hardening."* He eyed Dina to his left, who shifted lower to the ground in a tense manner.

"Four with dual-bladed swords to our flanks. Lara knows we can't harden our entire body constantly. They'll most likely deal swift attacks and wear down our defenses," Eren reasoned. A low rumble escaped his titan's throat, which reverberated throughout the city like a deep growl and made all the glass windows of houses in the vicinity rattle on their frames. The final two War Hammer Titans stayed just behind the walls of Marley's capital and aimed their longbows at Eren and Dina respectively. The remaining six bashed through the steel-reinforced wall with little effort, making massive chunks of stone rain into the city and tear into numerous buildings.

"They're not even caring about the city itself," Eren realized with a frown. He watched how big chunks of brick and broken steel shot into luxurious houses, pavements, and canals, creating complete carnage around the advancing Titans. *"Is it because they know we'll destroy most of it anyway? Then why did the very first War Hammer Titan which Dina and I fought jump over the wall?"* Reinforced plates of titan hardening coalesced together with the knuckles on his balled fists. To his left, Dina elongated her claws to razor-sharp blades.

"Dina... We'll have to work together to win. Let's play off each other's strengths and show Lara the true Power of the Titans!"

Eren's deafening roar thundered across Marley's vast metropolis, its defiant undertones like that of a caged beast who tried to break free. It didn't seem to deter any of the War Hammer Titans at all, who kept dashing forward stoically. The loud cocking of string on bows resonated even through Eren's intimidating roar. The two War Hammer Titans with their longbows released their arrows, which zipped through the air like missiles. They whizzed past the other six War Hammer Titans perfectly and traveled at high velocity toward Eren and Dina.

Eren narrowed his eyes and simply ducked to avoid the incoming arrow, which zipped past him and drilled itself into a beautiful mansion. The impact made the mansion explode as if a bomb had gone off inside of it. A big layer of dust and smoke rose from the impact and what was left of the mansion collapsed in on itself. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw how Dina gracefully dodged the incoming projectile that came her way, which impacted part of the canals behind her and completely destroyed a bridge made out of cobblestone.

Eren grumbled when two War Hammer Titans with dual-wielding swords advanced on him rapidly, giving him no time to defend himself in his ducked position. They swung their weapons agilely. The razor-sharp blades cut into parts of his torso, making steaming-hot blood erupt out of the gaping wounds at a rapid pace. He gritted his teeth. *"No time for defense, just attack and get them off of you, Eren,"* he thought before dive-tackling both of them to the pavement from his low position to the ground.

Eren wrapped his arms around their shins so they lost their balance and tumbled down, making them collapse atop rows of buildings still fortunate enough to be standing. It created loud tremors all around them while the earth rattled ominously. Eren recovered and looked up to see one of the other War Hammer Titans standing above him with her broadsword raised high above her head. His eyes widened

to pinpricks. *"Quick, do something before she beheads you!"* his mind screamed at him. Out of pure reflex, he grabbed the War Hammer Titan to his left and pulled her on top of him. Not a second later, the broadsword swung down potently, aimed straight at his neck.

A sickening crack echoed heavily on top of Eren as the broadsword sliced cleanly through the War Hammer Titan's armored face and head. He effectively used her as a makeshift shield and stopped the sword from reaching his neck, but the brunt of the impact still traveled all the way to Eren's body inside his titan. He hacked and squirmed as a sharp pain exploded from his left leg. *"The impact still had enough force to break my femur bone,"* he thought with a wince. He hissed in pain and anger while a river of steamy blood gushed out of the downed War Hammer Titan on top of him. It splattered against his face and torso while the still-standing War Hammer Titan struggled to retract her broadsword from her downed ally.

"Now is my chance!" Eren realized. He roared and rolled to his right to escape his precarious situation. The other downed War Hammer Titan recovered slightly and picked her dual swords back up to overpower Eren, only for him to grab both her legs and make her trip again. She stumbled and fell right on top of the broadsword still stuck in the defeated War Hammer Titan. The damage wasn't nearly enough to defeat her, but her weight crashing fully on top of it made the other War Hammer Titan lose her grip completely on the broadsword, disarming her.

Eren knew he couldn't stand with his broken leg. The exploding pain radiating through his body made him extremely nauseous and almost lose his consciousness. He simply acted on adrenaline alone. He managed to grab one of the swords of the downed War Hammer Titan and raised it above his head to hack away at the War Hammer Titan's neck who currently tried to get up from atop the broadsword that partially cut into her torso. *"This should be two-!"* A sharp pain suddenly exploded from his hand, cutting off his thoughts completely.

Eren watched in a stupor as his titan's hand completely splattered into big chunks of meat and blood. He only registered the sharp whizzing sound of a projectile a second later in his brain. An arrow had struck his hand and ripped it to shreds. Only large chunks of some of his fingers still remained attached to his wrist and his weapon dropped to the ground. He looked back at the smirking War Hammer Titan from afar, who grabbed another arrow and cocked it on her longbow. *"What a nuisance! You want to play like that?"* Eren thought, growling like a wounded wolf.

Eren narrowed his eyes when she shot another arrow, this time straight at his face. He hardened his still-functioning hand while the arrow flew at him lethally. With extreme reflexes, he swung his hand in front of his face and grabbed the whizzing projectile straight out of the air with a loud, rumbling grunt. The velocity of the arrow made his hand crack nonetheless, but he stopped it dead in its tracks. The War Hammer Titan's smirk turned into a surprised frown. *"We'll be playing like that then!"* he thought with a loud roar.

Eren turned his torso and rammed the sharp part of the arrow with all his strength into the neck of the War Hammer Titan he tried to defeat earlier. It pierced her armor and drove through the other side of her neck. Eren didn't stop there and smashed his hardened fist repeatedly against her neck, making shockwaves travel through the vicinity with each potent punch. He lost himself so much in his rage that he failed to take the fourth War Hammer Titan into account, who unceremoniously kicked him straight across his face.

The force blasted Eren away and made him crash against multiple rows of houses. The impact reduced them to complete dust and rubble. He groaned, clearly rattled. His entire face got mauled and most of his body sustained heavy damage. *"It's too much. I managed to defeat two, but the other two are still perfectly capable of battling."* He looked up to see Dina struggling just as much as he did. *"Is she doing better than I am? I can't tell... My vision is blurry..."* Eren thought. His mind wanted to embrace sweet nothingness at this

point. *"Eren, don't... drift... off."* He knew one more arrow would be enough to put the final nail in the coffin for him.

Eren struggled to stay awake. In his blurry vision, he saw the final War Hammer Titan approaching him with her broadsword retrieved. The other War Hammer Titan aimed another arrow at him. *"I'm done for..."* he thought. He didn't have enough time to heal himself. *"My body doesn't respond to me either. I can't get up..."* Eren watched helplessly how the War Hammer Titan raised her broadsword high in the sky while the other one released her arrow for the final blow against him.

Dodging that arrow from the War Hammer Titan who used a longbow didn't require much skill on Dina's part. Eren had trained and prepared her well. The War Hammer Titans flanking her with their dual-wielding swords and the final one in the middle approaching her menacingly with a broadsword, however, would put all of her experience to the test. *"I need to use my speed and agility to my advantage,"* Dina thought. Her elongated claws and nimble size made for excellent offensive weapons, but left much to be desired for defense.

Trusting that Eren would be all right, Dina solely focused on the most dangerous foe of the small group of War Hammer Titans surrounding her. She roared and leaped at the broadsword-wielding War Hammer Titan with both of her claws extended. Then, she brought them both down in a potent swipe, slashing at her armored torso and leaving long gashes all over her body. The War Hammer Titan stumbled a little but continued to raise her broadsword executioner-style, unbothered by the damage she received.

At the same time, both dual-wielding War Hammer Titans swung their swords at Dina. The sharp weapons cut cleanly through the soft tissue of her skin and muscles, creating deep, bloody wounds on her body. She huffed in annoyance and surprised the War Hammer Titans with her speed. Within one smooth motion, she danced out of the way of the incoming broadsword and swiped her claw upward,

severing the left arm of one of the dual-wielding War Hammer Titans. The force of the upward trajectory sent her limb flying, until it crashed into a random home meters away, completely destroying it.

The War Hammer Titan swung her broadsword down at the spot Dina previously occupied and only managed to cleave the pavement and make a big plume of smoke rise from all the rubble that flew in every direction after the impact. *"Now for my next trick!"* Dina thought, high on adrenaline. She aimed one set of her claws at the stunned War Hammer Titan-who just lost her arm-as if wielding a crossbow. While supporting her arm with the other to keep it steady, she shot all five of her fingers straight at the War Hammer Titan's head.

The hardened claws whizzed through the air and penetrated the titan's face with loud bangs, drilling themselves into her brain and making her collapse to the ground. *"Better be careful now, Dina,"* she thought while looking at the War Hammer Titan in the distance cocking another arrow on her longbow. *"You can't use one of your hands for a little while now until it has healed."*

The other dual-wielding War Hammer Titan sprinted at her and slashed both of her swords in a circular pattern. Dina didn't try to dodge and simply let it hit her in preparation for a counterattack. Both swords cut through her shoulder joint and made her arm fall limply to her side. *"Like I expected!"* Dina thought victoriously. She'd hoped Lara would prioritize taking out her arm which still held a set of functional claws to attack with. *"You thought it would leave me completely defenseless..."* She thrust her other arm upward, straight against and through the War Hammer Titan's chin. The end of her wrist had shifted into a single, sharply-pointed spear. It sunk through her armor until it came out of the other side from atop her head with a sickening sound and a gush of steaming blood. *"Think again!"*

The War Hammer Titan went limp in her grip. Dina immediately side-stepped and hid behind the defeated War Hammer Titan's body from the incoming arrow shot her way, wrist still stuck in her head. The arrow penetrated the War Hammer Titan's back until the sharp end

went out of the other side. She grumbled and eyed her other adversary still within striking range of her. That War Hammer slashed her big broadsword sideways. The air thundered around the sword and the only thing Dina could do in this situation was hardening the part of her torso the blade would hit.

A big grunt left Dina's mouth at the incredibly potent impact. The broadsword's strength managed to get through her hardening and break a big chunk of flesh off her torso. The large, gaping wound spewed blood everywhere and made her legs buckle. She lost her balance and went down on one knee, gasping for air. *"So strong... !"* she thought, her eyes wide in surprise and denial. *"I can't fight much longer. My titan is completely useless. Should I do it now?"* She noticed the War Hammer Titan retrieved her broadsword from her torso to finish her off. *"You don't have much of a choice, Dina..."* She gave a quick glance to Eren and gasped when she saw his titan crumpled and broken against a row of houses.

"Eren is down too. This might not be enough to defeat them all, but I have to at least try." Dina went down on both knees and focused all her energy inward. She tried to harden her body all at once and felt a big resistance blocking her from doing so. She ignored the resistance and the pain wracking her brain. *"Eren is depending on you, Dina. Give it your all!"* she thought while her titan glowed brighter and brighter. Steam rose out of every pore, heating up her body so much that Dina's skin melted from the intense heat. *"No holding back! For Eldia!"* She roared and released the built-up energy all at once.

The sudden explosion blasted her titan's body into smithereens while millions of pebble-sized lava rocks spewed from her body like a rapid-firing machine gun. The blast overtook the War Hammer Titan still in her vicinity and completely evaporated her. A big boom reverberated through the area which shook the earth. Thousands of lava pebbles traveled far and wide, pelting both longbow-wielding War Hammer Titans and melting their armors away. It turned them into nothing but chunks of meat and metal, annihilating them both on

the spot. The sounds of all the pebbles whizzing through the air sounded like an unending wave of arrows raining down from the air.

The initial blast destroyed the entire block of houses and other manmade objects close to Dina, reducing them to nothing but dust. The rest of the block got shredded by all of the lava pebbles, totally annihilating anything resembling a home. A big plume of smoke rose into the air where Dina had exploded, while countless fires broke out everywhere, making the once-gorgeous capital of Marley burn. The only other War Hammer Titan close to Dina, the one with her broadsword raised to end Eren, got completely shredded as well. Almost nothing remained of her body as thousands of pebbles continuously penetrated her back until they had done so much damage that they pierced all the way through her.

Fortunately for Eren, most of the attack ended up blocked by the War Hammer Titan, yet still a couple of dozen pebbles pierced his body too and burned him away from the inside out. Dina couldn't do much to help him at this point. She completely burned up and had no muscles left over to even move herself. *"It's now entirely up to you, Eren. I'm completely out,"* Dina thought. She couldn't see anything with the large plumes of smoke billowing all around her. In the distance, she heard the distinct sounds of her allies battling against the other Titans. *"They're still standing, at least. I hope they are doing well."*

Silently, Dina closed her eyes and listened how the city around her burned.

Ymir didn't know what had happened. Her titan lay in a large crater, all of her limbs mangled the wrong way and she could barely breathe. Above her, the remaining War Hammer Titan she had tried to face all by herself had thrown her down. Now, she stared down the barrel as that War Hammer Titan thrust her spear downward to cleave her real body straight through her neck. Ymir closed her eyes on instinct and waited for the inevitable piercing pain to come, but instead, a sudden explosion rattled the area violently.

Ymir gasped when the War Hammer Titan lost her balance just a little, which resulted in her spear cleaving nothing but pavement. *"Finally, a little bit of luck! C'mon, Ymir! Do something and make Eren proud!"* she thought to herself. With extreme willpower, she focused solely on healing her broken body while the War Hammer Titan recovered and pulled back her spear out of the rubble. Undeterred, she thrust the spear back to cleave Ymir again. Only this time, Ymir reacted. *"Now!"* she thought. With a swift motion, she rolled out of the way of the incoming spear, making it impact nothing but rubble once more.

Ymir smirked and leaped away using only her right hind leg. *"Focusing my healing on just a single body part speeds up the process considerably. Thank you, Eren, for teaching me that trick,"* Ymir thought. The War Hammer Titan gave her an annoyed look and retracted her spear, then cocked back her elbow and upper body in a throwing motion. All color drained from Ymir's face and her grin faded into nothingness. *"I don't have the mobility yet to dodge that!"* she realized, panic setting in like a freight train.

Ymir braced herself for imminent impact, only to widen her eyes when a large bolt soared past her. The bolt hit the War Hammer Titan straight in her chest and made her stumble back. Ymir looked back in surprise and gasped. *"Sasha!"* she thought elatedly. She had healed enough after the initial attack to shoot an arrow and defend Ymir. *"She needs more time, though... time Connie doesn't have at all,"* Ymir realized. Sasha struggled to get up while the Armored Titan lay completely flat on his face, unmoving.

"At least Connie can't possibly be hurt further in this state. Not until more War Hammer Titans arrive. Which means..." Ymir growled now that her other leg healed up fully as well. She didn't hesitate and sprinted at the War Hammer Titan who barely recovered from the surprise attack from Sasha. With a mighty leap, she jumped up to her face and started scratching at her armor, doing minimal damage in the process. *"Don't let her grab you this time, just annoy her as much as you can!"* Ymir reminded herself.

The moment Ymir saw Lara's hands coming in close, she leaped away again and landed behind her. "*That should-*" Ymir's thoughts died away when a big spear suddenly protruded from the ground and skewered her titan. The spear rose high into the sky, trapping her at the serrated end. She gurgled helplessly while coughing up blood. "*W-What...?*" She held on to the spear with her claws, lest her titan would slowly slide further down the bloodied shaft of the spear.

The War Hammer Titan didn't give her a second glance and eyed Sasha stoically. With an arrow still lodged deep in her chest, she threw her spear at Sasha with deadly accuracy. Ymir only watched helplessly as the spear pierced itself through Sasha's already wounded body with so much force that she got blown off of her feet. "*No! Sasha!*" Ymir screamed, struggling to pull herself off of the spear. She couldn't feel her lower half, but her arms still worked fine. "*C'mon, do something, Ymir! Get... yourself... down!*" She buried her claws in the spear to get a better grip on the slippery shaft and heaved herself up. Slowly, she gained ground, completely destroying her claws in the process.

The War Hammer Titan didn't even bother to look back. She solely focused on killing Sasha and walked toward her to retrieve her spear. "*Not... on my watch!*" Ymir cried out. With a heavy push, she freed herself from her trap and tumbled down to the ground. Not even the thud she made on the ground alerted Lara. All around the city explosions and battles went on, drowning out her impact in the chaotic chorus that surrounded her. Ymir dragged herself on the ground with her big arms like a crawler, gaining ground surprisingly quickly. "*I'm not done with you yet!*" she thought, clinging to the War Hammer Titan's left ankle and trying to slow her down.

Finally, that got Lara's attention. The surprise on her face due to Ymir's perseverance made the War Hammer Titan scowl. She stopped, turned around on her right ankle as if doing a pitcher throw, and then used all her strength to kick her left leg in the air. The resulting force threw Ymir off of her ankle and made her fling away like a hockey puck. She tumbled over the ground and smashed

through multiple buildings, destroying them in the process. The world spun around her and only pain and extreme dizziness overtook her senses until everything went black.

Sasha's struggled against all of the odds. She'd never expected that surprise attack from the War Hammer Titan she downed. *"I can't do much. That spear severed my spine,"* she thought. Sweat dripped from her brow when Connie went down and Ymir followed soon after. *"Is it all over for us? After training so much with Eren... All for nothing?"* she hung her head low, giving in to that extreme overpowering feeling of defeat until an explosion rattled her. It brought her back to her senses, especially when she saw that Ymir didn't give up either. *"No! What are you thinking, Sasha? Eren depends on you! All of Eldia depends on you!"* She focused all her effort on her arm and managed to materialize a single bolt.

All of Sasha's hunter instincts made her focus and she fired, hitting the War Hammer Titan straight in her chest. *"Now... I just need to find the strength... to fire another!"* She tried, but the effort it took made her gasp and sweat bullets. Her vision blurred and her arm lost considerable strength. *"I need to stay awake. One last time!"* Sasha never saw the second spear coming. It cleaved her torso just above where the first one hit. The velocity of the throw made her fly off of her feet. Motionlessly, she lay on her back. She could barely breathe with how much effort it took her.

"Now, it's truly over. I'm sorry, Connie. I'm sorry, Ymir. I wasn't strong enough..." Sasha heard the footsteps of the War Hammer Titan come closer to her. At this point, she could barely lift her head. When she appeared in her point of view, a cold dread washed over Sasha. *"There's nobody who can save you now, Sasha,"* she thought. She didn't know what happened to Ymir, but if Lara came her way, she assumed the worst. Yet, a loud, defiant growl made her stop her destructive thoughts. *"Ymir! She's still alive... and fighting! Despite all of her injuries, she's giving it her all..."*

Sasha watched as Lara kicked Ymir away off her ankle, where she mercilessly smashed through multiple buildings until eventually skidding to a halt. Debris buried the completely wrecked Jaw Titan underneath an avalanche of collapsed buildings and dust. The carnage left a clear path of destruction in its wake. Multiple plumes of smoke billowed into the already darkened air from all of the fires everywhere, only adding to the total annihilation of the capital of Marley. *"If Ymir is giving it her all..."* She grunted and aimed her crossbow at the distracted War Hammer Titan. *"Then so will I!"*

Sasha managed to find the strength she sought and fired a single bolt from her crossbow. It soared lethally through the air and hit Lara straight in the back of her head. The War Hammer Titan stiffened and then fell forward, taking her out of the battle. *"That's it... Well done, Sasha!"* she praised herself, feeling all her strength drain from her body. She couldn't even move a muscle if she wanted to.

" I'm so raiding the meat cabinet after this battle is over."

Hope you guys enjoyed! Please leave a review if you did! I'll try my best to update this story more frequently from now on. Time to finish it!

~Syrup